

10¢ **BLACK BOOK** **DETECTIVE**

MAR.



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THE BLACK BAT'S SPY TRAIL

A LONG BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL
FEATURING TONY QUINN

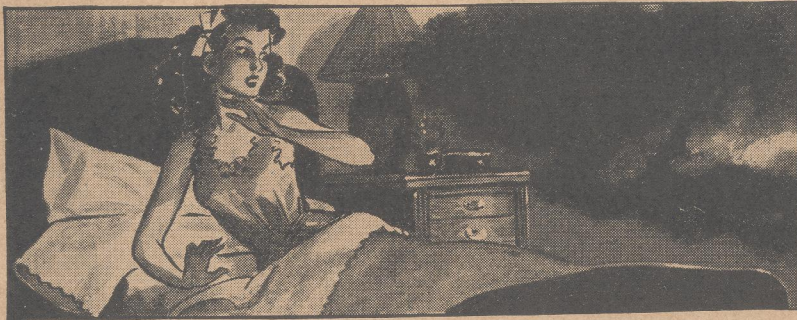
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**MYSTERY
NOVEL
EVERY
ISSUE!**

"I WAS TRAPPED IN A BLAZING INFERNO!"

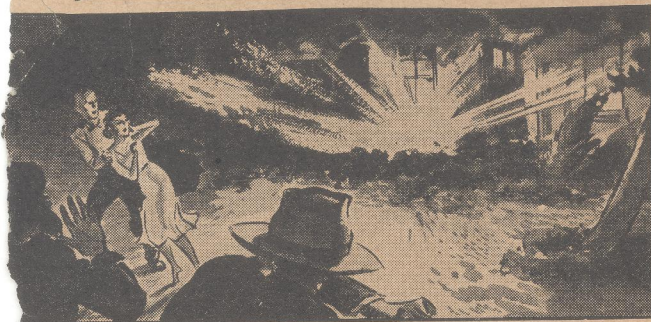


A true experience of MRS. LILLIAN POKEDOFF, Brooklyn, N. Y.



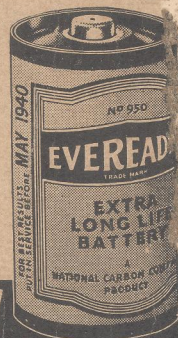
"AN OMINOUS, CRACKLING NOISE" awoke me the first night I was visiting in a strange farmhouse," writes Mrs. Pokedoff. "Choking and coughing from smoke, I groped for the bedroom door and staggered out into the hall.

"IN THE THICK, BILLOWING SMOKE I couldn't locate the stairway. When I heard a muffled sound from below and a choked sob, I hurried to the door to find a woman in a nightgown, looking up to me with a look of terror.



"DOWN THE STEPS first in time—for a kerosene tank exploded and landed on the ground! I sincerely say that I owe my life to those dependable 'Eveready' fresh DATED batteries!

(Signed) (Mrs) Lillian Pokedoff"



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HOLLIS F. HAYES
327 MADISON ST., LAPEER, MICH.



I WAS WORKING IN A GARAGE WHEN I ENROLLED WITH N.R.I. I AM NOW RADIO SERVICE MANAGER FOR M----- FURNITURE CO. FOR THEIR 4 STORES.

JAMES E. RYAN
1543 SLADE ST.
FALL RIVER, MASS.

N.R.I. TRAINING HELPED ME GET AND HOLD MY JOB. I AM NOW IN CHARGE OF THE RADIO DEPARTMENT FOR THE AMERICAN AIRLINES AT CLEVELAND.

WALTER S. MURRAY
AMERICAN AIRLINES, MUNICIPAL AIRPORT, CLEVELAND, OHIO.



THANKS TO N.R.I. TRAINING I AM FOREMAN IN A RADIO FACTORY. I AM MAKING MORE MONEY AND HAVE TWO N.R.I. STUDENTS HELPING ME.

OTTO CLIFFORD
312 W. SEMINARY ST.
CHARLOTTE, MICH.

MY LOUDSPEAKER SYSTEM PAYS ME ABOUT \$35 A WEEK BESIDES MY RADIO WORK. IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR YOUR COURSE I WOULD STILL BE MAKING COMMON WAGES.

MILTON I. LEIBY, JR.,
TOPTON, PA.



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and full time opportunities and those coming in Television; tells about my Course in Radio and Television; shows many letters from men I have trained, telling what they are doing and earning. Read my money back agreement. MAIL COUPON in an envelope or paste on a penny postcard—NOW!

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Dept. OCO9, National Radio Institute
Washington, D. C.

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MAGAZINE.

Vol. 10, No. 3

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March, 1940

A Complete Book-Length Novel

THE BLACK BAT'S SPY TRAIL



Featuring Tony Quinn, Nemesis of Crime

By G. WAYMAN JONES

Battling Valiantly Against Sabotage, Wholesale Murder, and Espionage, the Nocturnal Champion of the Victims of Crime Flies into the Valley of Death—Ready to Fight Grim Traitors Bullet for Bullet and Blow for Blow!.....

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BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE MAGAZINE. Published bi-monthly by Better Publications, Inc., at 4600 Diversey Ave., Chicago, Ill. N. L. Pines, President. Editorial and executive offices, 22 West 48th St., New York, N. Y. Entered as second-class mail matter November 13, 1938, at the Post Office at Chicago, Ill., under Act of March 3, 1879. Copyright, 1940 by Better Publications, Inc. Yearly \$3.60; single copies, \$1.00; Canadian and foreign, postage extra. Names of all characters used in stories and semi-fiction articles are fictitious. If the names of any living person or existing institution are used, it is a coincidence. Manuscripts must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope and are submitted at the author's risk.

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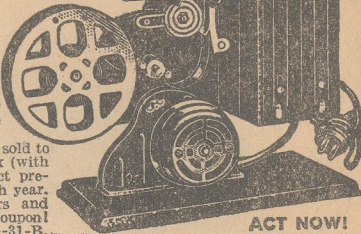
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Boys!



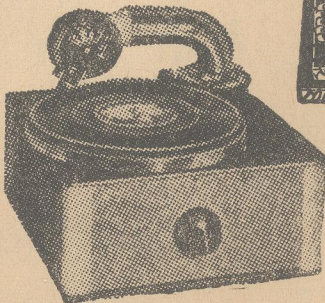
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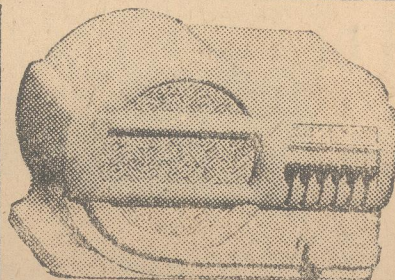
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OFF THE RECORD

THE tom-tom beat of drums and the twisting, sinuous dance of barbaric worshippers are products of the jungles, of native superstitions and rites that are alien to us. They're cause for creepy chills and shivery fear, but fortunately they're far enough removed from our environment so that we don't have to worry about them.

When they're present, however, right in the heart of a modern civilized city, when you encounter their insidious manifestations in the midst of ordinary every-day happenings, there's cause for terror—stark, raving terror! And that's just what happens in the next issue of **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE** in a stirring, spine-tingling complete book-length novel by G. Wayman Jones called **THE BLACK BAT'S CRUSADE!**

Voodoo Terror

Voodoo! The very name strikes an ominous note, calls forth a picture of that mysterious, unknown world that we know so little about. And the strange power of voodoo is abroad in the Black Bat's own city! A devilish cult has been formed, and a wave of terror follows in the wake of its activities!

Strange frightening deaths take place. Ominous threats accompanied by voodoo charms are received. Many prominent and wealthy people are drawn into the devilry that lies behind the barbarous cult. And Tony Quinn, the Black Bat, starts a daring crusade against an organization whose monstrous crimes scream to the high heavens for an avenger!

Right at the outset, the Black Bat is drawn into the picture. Carol Baldwin, the woman he loves, sees a woman approached as she steps out of a car. A leather pouch is thrust into the woman's hand. She opens it, screams and faints.

Into Danger's Arms

Carol reaches her and sees what is in the pouch. It is a man's head, carved out of lead with the features and expression delicately graven into the metal. Carol knows what this means. Tony Quinn has been studying voodoo because of the undercurrent of mysterious cult terror that has swept the

city. This head is a death ouanga, a curse upon the man whom it resembles.

Carol takes the death ouanga and sends it to Tony Quinn. Then she trails the woman to whom it was given—straight into the arms of deadly danger!

It's up to the Black Bat to rescue her—and it's up to the Black Bat to ferret out the deviltry behind the voodoo cult! A picture of foul blackmail forms clearly in Tony Quinn's mind—but there are so many puzzling angles that the picture becomes distorted. But the Black Bat pits dread against dread, wits against wits, and brawn against brawn—and brings his crusade to an astounding finish!

You'll read all about it in one of the most colorful, tense, action-packed cases Tony Quinn has ever undertaken—**THE BLACK BAT'S CRUSADE**, appearing in the next issue of **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE**!

Letters from Readers

In addition the next issue will contain many other stories of top-ranking quality.

A number you can't overlook!

Readers, keep those letters streaming in! Tell us what you think of the stories in this magazine! Your suggestions, comments and opinions help in planning future issues—and remember that a postcard is as welcome as a letter.

Here are excerpts from a few typical communications recently received:

I am now reading my third issue of **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE MAGAZINE**. I find it to be the most interesting and action-packed magazine of them all. I also would like to have a **BLACK BAT CLUB**.—William Harn, Kirbyville, Texas.

I have just read the story called **MURDER CALLS THE BLACK BAT** and would like to express my admiration for the author and you for putting such a good story on the market. This is the first time I have ever read **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE MAGAZINE** and I enjoyed it very much. In the future I hope to number myself as one of your most ardent fans. I will try to get the mag as soon as it comes out. Hoping that you will keep up the good work in presenting the best of stories in your magazine!—Joseph Earl Lomax, Baltimore, Md.

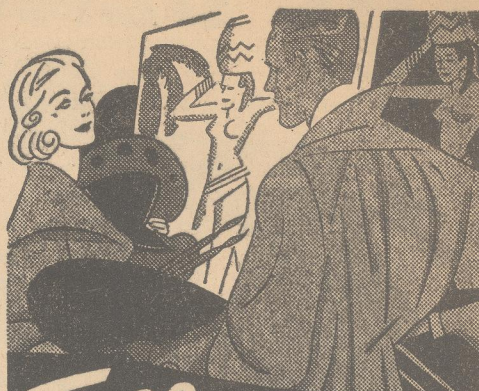
After reading **THE BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE MAGAZINE** I have a good opinion of it. Why not form a club? Count me in as a steady reader.—David Boxell, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Thanks to you all! See you in the next issue.—**THE EDITOR**.

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THE BLACK BAT'S

A Complete
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As the Bat pressed the muzzle of his gun against the spy's neck, he saw a hand clamp around one of the other men (Chapter VIII)

Battling Valiantly Against Sabotage, Wholesale Murder, and Espionage, the Nocturnal Champion of Crime Victims Flies Into the Valley of Death!

CHAPTER I

Death Lurks High

IN the thirty-second floor of the Falkner Building a pair of burly guards stood before the entrance of an office door labeled SOCIETY AMERICANA. They made no attempt to hide the shoulder-holstered guns they wore under their coats as two men left the private elevator.

The first to emerge was tall, white-haired and possessed of finely chiseled

features. His clothing spoke quietly of an expensive tailor.

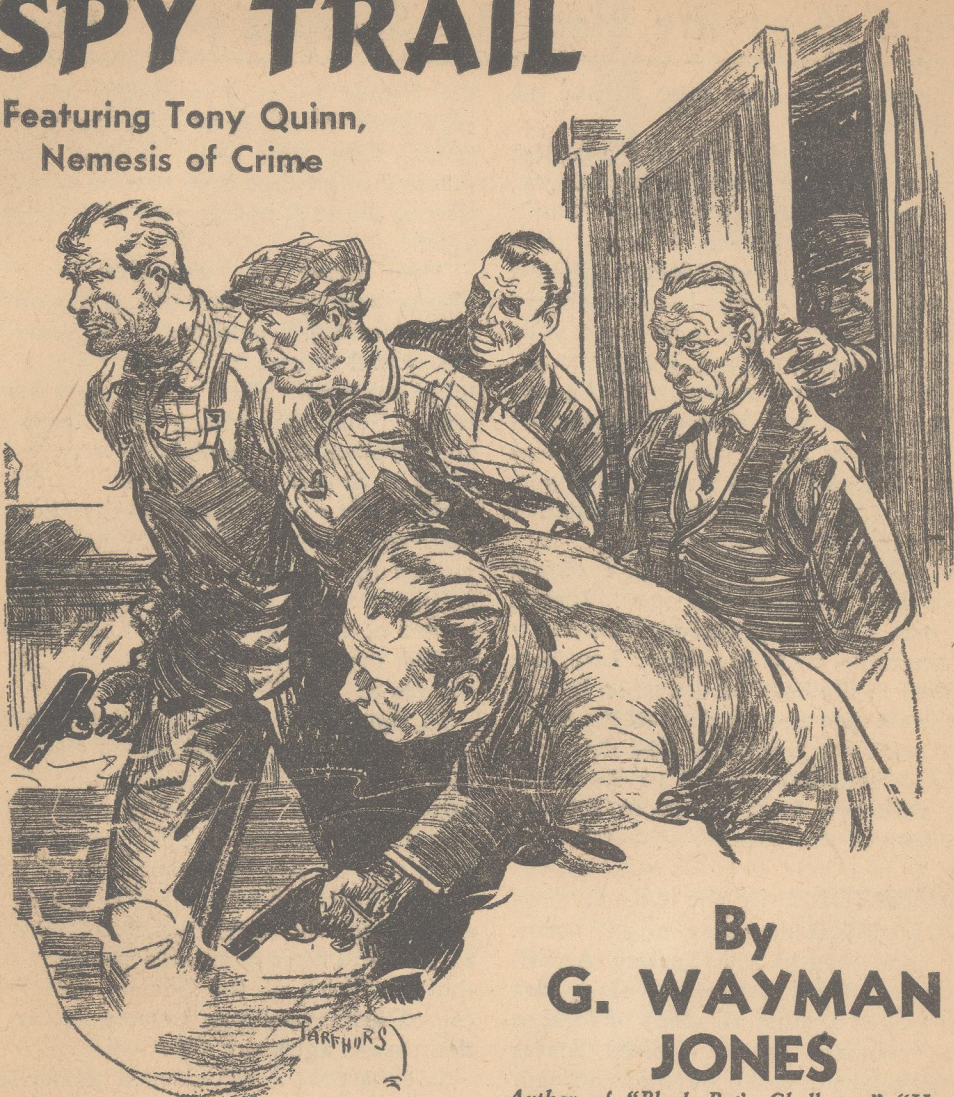
His companion's dress was different. A ready made suit hung from bony shoulders without much attention to drape or fit. This man's hat was a battered, cheap fedora, and he kept a cold cigar constantly rotating between his teeth.

The guards at the office door drew themselves erect and touched their foreheads in salute. One spoke to the second man.

"Everybody is inside, Chief. We searched 'em whether they liked it or not. Let's see"—the guard consulted a piece of dirty note paper—"there's Fisk, Fouquet and Brooks. That's the com-

SPY TRAIL

Featuring Tony Quinn,
Nemesis of Crime



By
**G. WAYMAN
JONES**

*Author of "Black Bat's Challenge," "Murder
Calls the Black Bat," etc.*

mittee. Collier and Sloane went in two minutes ago. The only guy missing is Lockhart."

The bony-shouldered man chuckled. "Good work, boys. This is Mr. Lockhart with me. He's chairman of this committee and remember boys—this is no ordinary case. We're helping these men rout out all kinds of 'isms' and spies throughout the nation. It's a great patriotic job and we should be proud to be a part of it."

Lockhart nodded in complete agreement, opened the office door with a key and waved his companion ahead of him.

They removed their coats and hats in an ante room. Lockhart rubbed his hands gleefully.

"Allen, you've done a good job. All of us have received threats in one form or another, and your detective agency has prevented the spies from inflicting any kind of injury upon us. From this moment on, however, your vigilance will have to be increased, for inside this meeting room are Collier and Sloane, agents we have employed to check on certain groups of men we suspect as fomenters of trouble for our country. They have worked hard and are ready

Once More the Black Bat Spreads His Wings

to report facts that may startle the whole nation."

Joe Allen, head of one of the largest private detective agencies in the city, removed his cigar and nodded. "Don't worry, Mr. Lockhart. I have thirty good men. Every one of 'em is engaged in protecting this committee which you head. We cover you at your home, your offices and enroute to any place at all. We're set to shoot at the drop of a hat. Every person who enters the lobby of this building is scrutinized. No one is allowed above the thirty-first floor, and the private elevator is watched every second."

Lockhart led the way to a closed office door and pushed it open. Inside, six men who were gathered around a square table, arose in a body. Lockhart walked to the head of the table, bowed to the six men and watched as Joe Allen eyed each one carefully. The detective seemed satisfied, waved to Lockhart and withdrew from the room, locking the door on the outside.

EVERYONE in the room realized that anything might occur. For four months the Society Americana had spent thousands of dollars into a fight against all kinds of foreign spies rampant in the United States since hostilities had broken out abroad. Each man had vivid memories of the Black Tom explosion, and could imagine railroad bridges being blown up, battleships scuttled and troop movements flashed abroad.

When the First World War began,

the United States was hardly able to cope with the horde of spies and saboteurs. This time four wealthy men planned to arrange it so that no repetition of the 1917 horrors should happen again.

They hired two ex-secret service agents with clean records and dependable reputations, paid them a handsome salary and turned them loose on an intense spy hunt. Their orders were definite. Small fry, minor bund leaders and propaganda spreaders were left alone. Sloane and Collier concentrated their efforts to expose the higher ups, and brainy, moneyed men who guided the destinies of spy work and were the really dangerous types. Deprived of their leadership, minor spies would promptly tuck their tails and run for it.

In many respects the work of the Society Americana resembled that of the Dies Committee except that the society worked under cover and with the utmost secrecy. They were not hampered by legal red tape, and so far they had progressed well. Yet that the spy leaders were aware of this attempt to frustrate their plans was apparent in that members of the Society had received grim warnings to stop butting their heads against a stone wall.

Lockhart sat down, clasped his hands together and leaned across the table.

"Durrance," he said, "this is your first appearance at one of our meetings. As an international attorney of the highest reputation we have presented certain evidence for your consideration. Are we within our rights to continue this work?"

Durrance, a heavy-set man of about forty-five, carefully placed gold-rimmed pince-nez glasses on his nose, arose and cleared his throat.

"You are not, gentlemen. Some of your work has been directed against accredited diplomatic agents of foreign powers. They possess a certain immunity from investigations such as you have started against them. I should



and Goes Forth to Combat Treachery!

say—stop this business now, forget about such things as spies or you will find yourselves in a predicament that even all your millions will not pull you out of. I could say that, but my conscience would never again be the same.

"So I say this—to the devil with restrictions. Carry on with this work. Uncover those damned spies. Show them up for what they are. Slinky, bestial interlopers who have no business in the United States. Smash their plans wherever possible. I'll stand firmly behind you and if there is any trouble, I'll exert my knowledge to protect you. There will be no fee. This is a patriotic duty and one I will enjoy."

There was a flutter of applause as Durrance sat down. Then Lockhart turned to the two men who sat at the opposite end of the table. They seemed calm and betrayed not the slightest emotion over Durrance's speech. Both had their arms on the table; both regarded Lockhart with unblinking eyes. He noticed this and shivered. There was something unholy in that look.

"Collier and Sloane," he said finally, "are our two crack agents. They have risked their lives to gather pertinent information and now they are ready to reveal what they know. Mr. Fisk has already ascertained that their investigation has borne fruit."

HENRY FISK, at Lockhart's right hand, nodded. He was a slender, average sized man who had a habit of constantly blinking his eyes in a nervous manner. He seemed ill at ease, running a finger along a limp collar despite the fact that the temperature of the office was controlled by air conditioning and wasn't warm enough to cause the perspiration that glistened on his brow.

"I—I think," he said with a catch in his voice, "that we'd better listen to Collier and Sloane first. I've only been told part of what they know and—and it's astounding. It—it's made an old man out of me."



The Black Bat

Across the table Fouquet, an energetic man of about sixty-five, seemed greatly impressed. At his side Hugh Brooks, polished and able international financier, seemed languid in comparison. Hugh Brooks never lost his poise, never betrayed his emotions.

Lockhart waved a hand at the two queerly staring agents.

"Speak, gentlemen," he said, and sat down and looked at them expectantly.

But neither man moved a muscle. Henry Fisk, one of those closest to the agents suddenly kicked his chair back, gave a strangled scream.

"My God! They're dead!" he cried.

Lockhart jumped to his feet. The others started up in consternation, as Lockhart rushed around the table, put a hand on Collier's shoulder. The agent sagged sideways from the weight of the hand. Then, slowly, he toppled off the chair.

Sloane, the second agent, sat there like a frozen Sphinx, but Lockhart had only to look into his face to see that death was written there. Something seemed to have happened to Sloane's eyes. There were no pupils. They had contracted until the naked eye could no longer see them.

Lockhart looked around at the other men. No one spoke. No one seemed able to speak. Lockhart drew out a small envelope from his pocket, removed a white card and read the message on it aloud in a shaking voice. It was:

Your agents will make no report. All of you are doomed from this moment on. You have stepped on the neck of a rattlesnake. Serpents bite.

"I received that this morning," Lockhart said. "I didn't tell you about it because I thought it impossible for any man to reach our agents. Good Lord—Collier and Sloane walked in here! It seems I'm wrong. Fisk, rap on the door and bring Detective Joe Allen in here. Then, gentlemen, we'll have to call in the police."

Fisk tried to answer, but his throat seemed paralyzed. The hand that tapped meekly on the door shook badly. But the key turned, and Joe Allen came in. He gaped at the two agents and then went to work. He knelt beside the fallen Collier, made a quick examination, and then examined the seated body of Sloane.

"See here," he rasped, "no one leaves this office, get me? No one! These two men were murdered! Someone in here stuck a hypodermic needle into the back of their necks. It must have contained a violent poison. I saw these two men walk into this office. They were all right then."

Lockhart looked around. "Where is Fisk? What's happened to him?"

JOE ALLEN arose hastily, raced through the outer office and opened the hall door. His two men knew that something was wrong, but they had their orders and had stayed in position. Each held a gun exposed now.

"Fisk?" one of them answered Allen's barked question. "Yeah, sure. He came outa there like he was shot from a gun. Hollered something about a murder and then beat it for the eleva-

tor. We let him go because you only gave orders to stop anybody from going into the place. O'course we know he musta been nuts. Imagine—a murder in there!"

"Two murders, you saps," Allen said savagely. "Send word down to the other boys to get Fisk. Get him if they have to put a bullet through his legs."

Joe Allen sprinted back into the conference room, stopped just inside the door and eyed the five men around the table. Lockhart was impatient for action. Fouquet was pale and drawn, his eyes riveted on the corpse that still sat at the table. Hugh Brooks, his emotions as impenetrable as ever, kept tapping a pencil eraser against the table top. In no other manner did he exhibit just how these two mysterious murders affected him.

"Fisk," Joe Allen ground out, "took a powder on us. I mean he ran away. The guy must know something. I'm putting all my men to work finding him."

"Do you think," Fouquet asked nervously, "that he killed these two men?"

Allen waved his arms in exasperation. "How do I know what to think—yet? This is a job for the cops. It's got beyond our control now. Mr. Lockhart you better phone Headquarters."

Lockhart merely nodded his head, walked into the outer office, crossed it and vanished into another room. Perhaps three or four minutes passed. Then Fouquet strolled over to a window and looked out. He saw the tiny forms of men running toward the building far below. Fouquet pushed the window up and leaned out cautiously.

"Allen," he yelled. "Allen, I—look. I—I think somebody is hurt down there. I can see a form lying on the sidewalk."

Joe Allen growled something about uncalled for interruptions, but he looked out of the window. When he ducked back, he was pale and drawn.

"Everybody stay here," he warned. "If you take chances and show your-

selves, the killer may rub you out too. I'm going down to the street. I—I'm afraid the corpse down there is—Lockhart."

Allen darted out of the office, looked around for Lockhart and didn't find him. He got into the private elevator and sent it down. On the street level he rushed through the lobby, battled his way through the crowd and then he stopped abruptly. The man who lay on the sidewalk had fallen from the building. He was undoubtedly Lockhart for he wore the same clothing and was exactly the same build. However, positive identification was impossible, for the corpse no longer had a face. It was nothing but a welter of blood and mangled flesh.

Then a detective cruiser howled up with dying siren. The rear door opened, and Lieutenant McGrath of the Homicide Squad alighted. He was about forty-five, beefy-faced, chunky but extremely fast in action. There was a permanent determined look on his face. McGrath was all cop. He'd only recently been raised from the rank of sergeant. He'd battled his way up from the ranks and was considered one of the best men on the force. McGrath had only one bane in life—the Black Bat! The mere mention of that eerie figure's name was enough to raise McGrath's blood pressure.

Joe Allen saw him, squeezed over to his side and tugged at his sleeve.

"Well, Allen," McGrath growled, "you got your long beak in this mess?"

"I'm in it to my ankles—maybe over my head," Joe Allen answered. "That guy on the sidewalk ain't the only dead man. There's two ex-Federal Bureau of Investigation lads on the thirty-second floor of this building. And, Mister, they are 'ex'—what I mean. Somebody stuck poisoned hypo needles into the back of their necks. McGrath, if you ever bumped your head against the impossible, you're about to do it now. Them two boys were murdered with five witnesses looking on and—listen

to this—nobody was close enough to either man to kill him."

"And this guy on the sidewalk," McGrath gestured toward the grisly corpse. "I suppose he just tried to take a walk out of the window. Don't be a fool, Allen. If there's been a double murder upstairs, this guy did it and took a dry dive in preference to facing the chair. It's as easy as that."

"Yeah?" Joe Allen asked derisively. "Easy as that, huh? You don't know who this dead guy happens to be. It's Lockhart, the big shot himself. He hired those two men who were killed upstairs. He paid them to dig up information. Do you think he'd knock them off?"

McGrath whistled softly and his face grew harsh. "Lockhart, eh? Stick around, Allen. If you'd like to keep that private dick license, stick around, understand?"

CHAPTER II

Accident or Murder



ALMOST directly across the great city a man sat before the fireplace of his home. Tony Quinn, once a promising young District Attorney, had been blinded by acid in a battle with crooks who sought to destroy important evidence.

A thin-faced man, almost entirely bald, entered the room with a tray which he placed carefully on a coffee table, poured a cup of coffee and handed it to Tony Quinn. Kirby Norton, better known as "Silk," was Quinn's all-around servant and closest friend. He acted as Quinn's eyes when anyone was present. For Tony Quinn was not really blind.

"Nice day," Quinn said with a smile. "I think I'll take my cane and tap my-

self out a little walk. Need the exercise, Silk."

The valet poured in a small quantity of cream and added a lump of sugar.

"Sometimes," he said, "I think you ought to give up this business, sir, and let everyone know you're no longer stone blind. You can't get away with it forever. Sooner or later some smart crook will find out Tony Quinn, blind man, is really The Black Bat! If Lieutenant McGrath doesn't prove it first."

Tony Quinn smiled, his whole face lighting up. It was a strong, good face, but some people might have winced at the sight of him. The corrosive acid hurled into his face had wrought deep scars. Tony Quinn made it a point never to think of them. They indicated positive evidence that the same acid had seared his eyes into permanent blindness.

But Tony Quinn had recovered the use of his eyes. Months after his fight with the acid-throwing crooks, when he had reached the depths of despair, an extremely pretty girl had appeared out of the night. She was Carol Baldwin. Acting under her orders, Tony Quinn had secretly visited a surgeon in a small mid-western town. There he had recovered his sight through the substitution of another man's healthy corneas.

Later he discovered that he owed his sight to Carol's father who had been a detective. A thug's bullet had smashed into the back of Baldwin's head, paralyzing several nerves that controlled the eyes and blinding him. Dying, and without the slightest hope, he had sent Carol to bring Quinn to this surgeon. Under the doctor's skilled hands the detective's eyes became Tony Quinn's. Shortly after the operation Carol's father died, but in dying he gave new life to Tony Quinn.

So was the Black Bat born. Resolved to fight crime with crime's own ruthless methods, he kept the recovery of his sight a strict secret. As blind

Tony Quinn, ex-district attorney, he would never be suspected. But at night he prowled the darkness garbed in black clothing with a hood that covered his entire head and a cape that was ribbed and scalloped to resemble the wings of a bat. The underworld had come to know this figure and dread it.

There were countless stories about the weird powers of this strange creature, but only three people knew the real truth. As a sort of repayment for his months of blindness, Quinn discovered that he was able to see as well in darkness as he was in the brightest sunlight. Even colors were vivid. And yet his hearing and sense of touch had grown extremely acute during his period of blindness, and the Black Bat found use for all of these senses.

Three people knew his dual identity. Silk Norton was one of them. Once Silk had been a confidence man, as smooth as the nickname that still clung to him. Then there was Jack O'Leary, known as Butch because of his vast bulk and insatiable appetite. Slower in thought than Silk, Butch was nevertheless a formidable antagonist in any kind of trouble. His devotion to the Bat was strong. No form of torture would have made him reveal the Bat's true identity.

Carol Baldwin was the third person in the know. She also took an active part in the Bat's constant campaign against those men who believed they were greater than the law. Blonde, decidedly pretty, a bond stronger than mere friendship had grown between her and the Bat. Both she and Butch maintained quarters not far from Tony Quinn's big residence. Their visits to him were accomplished by means of a hidden tunnel into his house. The Bat took no chances on placing either of them in danger.

QUINN finished his coffee, used his left hand to feel around for the table and then put the cup on it. He

never forgot that he was supposed to be stone blind. Even though he was sure that no one watched, he continually acted his part every moment except when he became the Bat.

Someone punched the door buzzer. Silk started up and his eyes flashed suspiciously. Quinn settled back in his chair. His eyes were dead looking. They stared just above the glowing embers in the fireplace and the cleverest eye specialist would have sworn Tony Quinn was blind.

Silk ushered in a neatly dressed man who seemed to be highly agitated. He accepted the chair that Silk shoved toward him. Then he leaned close to Quinn.

"I'm Rigby," he said. "Remember me?"

Quinn shook his head slowly and wrinkled his forehead in thought. "If I could see your face, perhaps I might recognize you. Your voice does seem familiar."

"I used to be a member of the F.B.I.," Rigby answered. "About eight months before you were—blinded, I had a long talk with you about a minor spy ring. You were District Attorney. We broke up the ring easily."

Tony Quinn's face lighted up. "Of course," he said. "How are you, Mr. Rigby? What can I do for you?"

Rigby dropped his voice to almost a whisper. "There's the very devil to pay, Mr. Quinn. Two other ex-agents and my self were retained by a group of millionaires calling themselves the Society Americana. They've been throwing money and time into one of the biggest spy hunts I've ever heard of. Worthy work, but dangerous. I think the spy ring is wise to me. About two hours ago I was nearly shoved off a subway platform in front of an incoming train. Plain luck was on my side."

"But what do you want from me?" Quinn asked with a puzzled frown.

Rigby leaned closer. "I think that



McGrath

spy ring we knew—they were delving in smuggling at that time, too, if you recall—is the nucleus from which this massive ring has grown. The F.B.I. turned the case over to you for prosecution because there was a murder mixed up in it. You talked to the important men involved in that affair. Did they tell you anything significant? About who was paying them and directing their activities, I mean?"

Quinn shook his head slowly. "There were two men, indicted and convicted of killing a police officer. They both went to the electric chair with sealed lips. Spies certainly should be wiped out before they get too deeply entrenched. Tell me more about this Society Americana. Who comprises it? I'd be agreeable to contribute financially to their work. I wouldn't be of much use otherwise."

Rigby sighed and arose. "I'm sorry, sir. I've promised not to divulge any information, even to a reliable person as I know you to be. I just hoped you might have some little lead. Sloane and Collier dug up something important. As for me, all I've found out is that pocket-watches fly."

"A watch that flies?" Quinn

frowned. "What kind of nonsense is that?"

"I'm not so sure that it is nonsense," Rigby answered. "That's the whole trouble with all this. I'm not sure about anything. But Sloane and Collier are. They know what that watch really means. That's why I'm working another angle and leaving that for them."

"It's most intriguing," Quinn said. "I'd like to know more about it. A blind man has so little to think about."

RIGBY shook hands with Quinn. "Sorry, even if I knew I couldn't tell you at this stage of the game. Don't bother to get up, Mr. Quinn. I can find the door all right."

Quinn smiled. "I was just getting ready to take a little walk when you arrived. I'll go to the door with you."

Rigby bade him good-by at the entrance and hurried down the path to the street. He started along the sidewalk, and Quinn was turning away when he heard the roar of a powerful motor. He turned back. The mask of blindness over his eyes vanished. A big sedan was racing down the street and turning toward the sidewalk.

Rigby saw it coming, gave a yell of alarm and tried to get out of the way. But the sedan hurtled the curb, struck the investigator and flung him back against a high stone wall. The car kept coming, struck the wall and pinned Rigby there.

"Silk!" Quinn called out. "Silk—hurry!"

Silk came barging down the hallway. He looked out the door, took in the situation at a glance and began running toward the wrecked car. Quinn's cane tapped an impatient tattoo on the porch. He ached to go over there and find out what had happened, but other people were approaching, and Tony Quinn was a blind man.

A radio car howled up and then an ambulance. Silk returned, his face somewhat ashen.

"Dead, sir. Smashed to pieces against the brick wall. Whoever did it jumped over the wall and got clear. The cops say the car was stolen about an hour ago."

Suddenly Quinn's hand gripped Silk tightly. Another car had pulled up and Lieutenant McGrath climbed out of it.

"McGrath will learn that Rigby came to see me just before he was killed. Several people saw him coming out."

"But what of it?" Silk asked. "Can't a man call on you and get killed by a hit-and-run driver a few minutes later? You don't think McGrath will try to pin that on you?"

"No, of course not," Quinn replied. "But, Silk, Rigby was investigating a spy ring. He was murdered—I'm sure of it—for he told me of another attempt on his life just before he came here. Rigby discovered something and it was dangerous for someone if he went on living. Do you think the Black Bat is going to stand by and let spies get away with a thing like this? Spies in a neutral country are war makers—and murderers. I detest them more than I hate ordinary crime and the poor fools who think they are clever enough to beat the law. I'm going to find out why Rigby was killed and by whom. The Bat will come to life again and that will make McGrath grow suspicious. Here he comes. If he questions you, tell the truth."

McGrath walked up on the porch, shoved his hat to the back of his head and surveyed Tony Quinn from head to foot.

"It's Lieutenant McGrath, sir," Silk said softly.

"I know," Quinn smiled. "I could tell his step a mile away. You have flat feet, Lieutenant."

McGRATH propped himself against the porch railing. "I didn't come here to talk about the state of my feet, Mr. Quinn. There's

been a man killed down the street. I understand he paid you a visit just before he died. What did he want?"

Quinn's blank, staring eyes were centered about a foot above McGrath's head. "He was investigating something or other. He came asking information about a case I handled when I—could see."

"Yeah," McGrath said derisively, "It couldn't be that he thought you were the Black Bat and came to ask your help. Sometimes I have my doubts, but right now I think Rigby came to see you because he was tipped off that you are the Bat. Rigby was an ex-G-man. He's not the first ex-G-man to die today. Two others were murdered in offices rented by some crazy outfit called the Society Americana. Rigby was a pal of theirs. I knew all three of them.

"And another thing—a millionaire named Lockhart took a dive out a window and made unrecognizable hash of his features. Maybe he knocked himself off—maybe he was murdered. I'm not sure yet, but I am positive that Rigby knew something about those kills."

Quinn's impassive features betrayed none of the surprise raging within him. Sloane and Collier dead? One of the men who hired them also dead—perhaps murdered, too. Now Rigby had met sudden, violent death. What was it all leading to? Certainly now, despite McGrath's suspicions, the Bat would take a hand.

"I'm sorry, Lieutenant," Quinn said slowly. "I told the truth. Kirby, my valet, was in the room at the time and heard everything that was said. If you continue to believe I am the Black Bat, that is your privilege. It was my impression that this Bat person worked alone and that no one knew his identity. Then how do you account for Rigby coming here and asking my help because I am the Bat? Think again, Lieutenant, and don't forget that I happen to be blind."

McGrath shrugged. "Well, I got nothing personal against you, Quinn. When you were the D.A. we handled some fancy cases together and did a good job on them. But I still think you're the Black Bat, blind or not. Some day I'll nail you. The Bat may fight crime just as I do, but he breaks plenty of laws in doing it. Remember that!"

McGrath bit off the tip of a cigar, glared at Silk and left.

"Just a good-natured cop, gentle as a lamb and with lots of tact," Silk commented. "But he's no dumb-bell, sir. That man would give his back teeth to land you. Now shall we get ready for that walk?"

"Walk?" Quinn said blankly. "Oh—no, Silk. It's late afternoon. In a short time it will be dark and bats will be flying. I don't even know who or what we're dealing with, Silk, but four murders in one afternoon indicates the men behind them aren't given to uneasy consciences. Better see that my guns are in trim."

"Yes, sir." Silk scurried away.

CHAPTER III

Visitor in Black



QUINN walked back into the house. Silk was already drawing the curtains in the study. Quinn walked up to a blank wall, touched a hidden control, and a door opened. He stepped into a white tiled laboratory, so constructed that only by actually tearing the house down, would it be discovered. From this secret room led a tunnel beneath Quinn's estate, ending in a small garden house at the far end of the heavily arborescenced yard. By this means Quinn could leave and enter without being seen.

The laboratory was equipped with

all manner of scientific devices used in detecting and suppressing crime. During the weeks in which he had to wait for his eyes to heal, Quinn had studied. At first Silk read to him and then, when the bandages were removed from his eyes, Quinn had taken a more active part in training himself for this grim fight. Independently wealthy, he could afford to spend large sums on equipment, and the best police lab in the world was no better furnished than this.

Quinn opened a small closet and drew out a strange looking costume. He donned the hood which covered his head completely except for small slits through which he could see. There were black garments and a cape for his shoulders which fastened under the arms. It billowed out and became taut when he spread his arms wide. In shadow or darkness Quinn looked like an immense bat, wings outspread for quick flight.

"What's the first step?" Silk asked as he carefully removed surplus oil from a thirty-eight automatic. Then he added hopefully, "Any chance of my getting in on it?"

"You are in," Quinn said. "So actively that you'll have to disguise yourself. One of those rigs you used when you floated around the country taking pennies from those poor orphans and widows."

Silk grimaced. "The only men I ever cheated were those with more larceny in their hearts than I had—and every one of 'em could afford it. Anyway, I spent all the dough, so it's just another way to keep up distribution of wealth, sir."

Quinn chuckled, because Silk had completely reformed and he was as trustworthy as a man could be. "Use the disguise which makes you look like a long-haired professor. Go to the Falkner Building where the men were murdered and Lockhart took a dive out of the window. Find out everything you can about the society and every-

one who was on the scene when all this happened."

"And you, sir?" Silk asked.

Quinn began removing his outer clothes and replacing the comfortable tweeds with the Bat's garb. He put black crepe-soled shoes on his feet, slipped his hands into black silk gloves and surveyed himself in the mirror. Certainly this weird being looked nothing like Tony Quinn. Neither did the brilliant, piercing eyes that glittered through the slits in the mask, resemble the dead, blank eyes of Tony Quinn.

"Contact Butch and Carol," he said. "Have them stand by for trouble. I'm going to find out what killed those two agents and whether or not Lockhart really jumped or was pushed. From what I've learned his features were practically eradicated. If he didn't land on his head the fall probably was not responsible. I'm going to the morgue, Silk."

After darkness had set in completely, Quinn used the tunnel, reached the garden house and made sure he was unobserved. He slipped out of the gate, ran lightly along the sidewalk to where a cheap, rather battered coupé was parked. It was always there, in readiness for the Bat's use.

THE City Morgue was located in a quiet part of the city. Anyone who happened to be passing by, might have thought they had seen a flitting shadow darting alongside the gray building, but they would have passed it off as a figment of their imagination, induced by what that building represented. The Bat's black outfit blended perfectly with the darkness.

He reached the back of the building, saw one of the morgue wagons parked in front of the garage and listened carefully to be sure no one was close by. Now the Bat's super-sensitive eyes became invaluable. They penetrated the night as though it was daylight. His keen hearing detected no



The Black Bat triggered both guns at the man behind the drapes (Chapter VI)

sound to give away the presence of another person nearby, and he saw no one.

The Bat stepped beneath a window of stained glass. He drew a thin piece of steel from his pocket, slid it between the sashes and opened the latch. He raised the window quietly, climbed inside and closed it again.

He was in some kind of a store room. Piled-up boxes, stacked at random on the floor, were no menace to his movements for they were revealed plainly to his abnormal eyes. He reached a door, opened it a crack and looked into a long corridor. Now he heard voices. One of them made him grimace. Detective-lieutenant McGrath was talking.

"Okay, Doc, you say it was a shot of hydrocyanic acid. But what I'd like to know is how could anybody walk up behind two healthy men, slide a needle into the back of their necks and inject the stuff without the victim yelling? A needle hurts—even in the back of the neck, doesn't it?"

"It does, and these two men were injected very deeply. I don't pretend to understand how it was done, Lieutenant. That's your job. Now if you'll wait a moment, we'll go down to the autopsy room and give Lockhart a going over."

Lieutenant McGrath, draped on the edge of a desk, didn't see the shadow that slipped along the corridor. He was too busy trying to puzzle out how those agents had permitted the murderer to poison them without making the slightest resistance.

Five minutes later McGrath grimaced when the medical examiner removed the sheet covering what was left of Lockhart. The dead man's face wasn't pleasant to look upon. The doctor worked methodically, dictating notes to one of the morgue attendants as he progressed. Finally he began drawing off his rubber gloves.

"This man died of a fractured skull—to put it mildly," he said. "His whole

head was caved in. There are no signs of poison nor of bruises that he might have suffered if someone had forced him out of the window. I think we can safely assume that he committed suicide, Lieutenant."

McGrath sighed. "And won't that make my life happier. If he bumped himself off, he must have had a hand in the murder of those two ex-G-men. And will you tell me why a man like Lockhart would be implicated in murder?"

The medical examiner shrugged, opened his mouth to speak and left it that way, agape. The autopsy room was illuminated only by a strong lamp hung directly above the operating table. It winked out. McGrath reached toward his hip pocket.

"I WOULDN'T do that, Lieutenant," a soft voice came out of the darkness. "All I ask is that you stand against the wall. You, too, Doctor, and your assistant as well."

"Who are you?" the medical examiner croaked. "What do you want?"

There was no reply. Under cover of the inky darkness, the Bat worked furiously. He deftly inked the hands of the dead man, made impressions of each finger on a white card and then wiped the fingers clean. Perhaps this corpse, with face completely unrecognizable, wasn't Lockhart's. The Bat intended to find out.

He moved toward the door, but none of the men in the room could see him doing it. Three minutes went by and the only sound was the hoarse breathing of the medical examiner and his assistant. McGrath was chewing the stub of a cigar, but he made no move to reach for his gun.

Then the light above the table suddenly flashed on. The medical examiner covered his eyes for a moment, accustomed them to the glare and then moved forward.

"Just take a look on the operating table, Doc," McGrath said quietly. "I

think you'll find the image of a bat pasted there. Am I right?"

The medical examiner saw it as McGrath spoke. It was merely a small silhouette of a bat, wings outspread in full flight. This was the brand of the Black Bat.

"How did you know it was there?" he asked. "Who was that? He moved around in the darkness as though he could see."

"He can," McGrath answered glumly. "And how did I know that sticker was there? I'm psychic. Now let's see if we can figure out what the Bat wanted with the corpse."

While McGrath busied himself looking for clues, the Bat was upstairs in the darkened offices of the medical examiner's quarters. On the desk were the death certificates for Sloane and Collier. The Bat read them in the darkness as easily as if they'd been under a desk lamp. Then he found a more detailed report. It was brief but interesting.

Strange contraction of the eye pupils indicating some myotic drug, but every test fails to show presence of anything but the hydrocyanic acid that apparently caused death. Contents of stomach reveal that both men ate a hearty meal an hour before death. Evidence of meat, potatoes, green beans and a tapioca dessert, all far from being digested. Poison was administered directly into a vein at the back of the neck. Needle penetrated slightly more than three centimeters and full load of the hypo given. Only part of the drug was absorbed. Definitely a cleverly planned double murder.

The Bat carefully replaced the papers, walked quietly toward the rear door and then paused. A telephone bell was ringing. He heard someone yawn, sigh and answer the phone.

"Falkner Building? What? Another suicide, huh? Okay, Officer, we'll be right up."

The Bat suddenly felt beads of perspiration from beneath his hood. The Falkner Building! Silk was there, making a quiet investigation. Was the morgue wagon being called to pick up his corpse?

CHAPTER IV

Hard to Handle



SILK left Quinn's house a full hour before his master departed. Had anyone been watching, he would never have recognized the valet. The man heading for the sidewalk was older than Silk, had curly gray hair and a short, mousy beard. He wore a black fedora, and a pair of glasses perched precariously on his nose lent an air to him. His white-edged vest, brown gloves and cane added to the picture. Silk knew how to disguise himself.

He walked to the corner, hailed a taxi by waving his cane and was driven to the business section. He paid off the driver, walked slowly along the street until he reached the entrance of the Falkner Building. He slipped inside unobtrusively, disdained the elevator and began methodically climbing the stairs.

This was the oddest case he'd ever seen the Black Bat handle. Even the Bat didn't know exactly what it was all about except that the danger was from a lethal spy ring. Collier, Sloane and Rigby had been murdered because they knew too much. Lockhart? Silk wasn't sure about him, but there was a vague notion in the back of his head that Lockheart either knew too much and was murdered or he had suddenly gone mad and leaped to his death.

Silk found that there was no stairway to the thirty-second floor. Prowling the corridor, he located the private elevator, got in and sent it up. He opened the door very softly and directly before him, he spotted the office door labeled SOCIETY AMERICANA. It being night, the place was dark and deserted.

He fished a bunch of keys out of his pocket, studied the lock and tried one

key. It slid into the lock easily, but the bolt refused to turn. Silk frowned, dropped a hand on the knob and turned it. The door was already unlocked. He drew a gun from his hip pocket, thumbed off the safety and suddenly flung the door wide. Light from the hallway served to illuminate the room. Apparently no one lurked there.

Silk stepped into the room. He felt a faint breeze on the nape of his neck and he swung around quickly. There was an ugly looking Luger pistol three inches from his eyes. Behind it was a slender, well dressed man who wore shell-rimmed glasses and a scowl that indicated he didn't like this intrusion.

"Drop the gun," he said. "Then walk over against the wall and sit down. I suppose you are selling books or possibly giving demonstrations of a vacuum cleaner. You shouldn't use private elevators, my stupid friend. That one in the corridor gives a signal in this office when it is being used. Now what do you want?"

Silk's glib tongue failed him for one of the few times in his life. There simply wasn't any logical excuse for his entering the office and the man with the gun didn't look as though he'd believe the truth if Silk were crazy enough to tell it. So Silk said nothing. He watched the man narrowly, looking for a chance to rush that gun.

THE man pulled a chair over in front of Silk and sat down himself. He had selected a straight-backed chair and he rocked slowly on its two hind legs.

"Then I must assume you are a thief and turn you over to the police," he said smoothly. "I would hate to do that, so why not tell me what brought you here?"

Silk wetted his lips. His right foot moved out a trifle, as though he were stretching it in an unconscious movement.

"I—" he began.

Then his right foot shot forward. The

toe hooked under a round of the chair which the armed man occupied and he heaved. The resultant crash was ear-splitting in the silence of the building. The armed man went flying backward. His gun left his hand and skidded into a corner. Silk dived for it. The door leading into another of the rooms opened. Two big men catapulted out, took in the situation at a glance and pounced on Silk.

He fought furiously for he had an idea that his life was at stake. One fist collided with a man's nose and drew blood, but that was the only blow Silk struck. Two huge hands circled his throat and squeezed. Above him the ceiling lights began to dance crazily. His lungs strained for air. He could feel those powerful fingers collapsing his wind pipe, bending the bones in his throat. Silk suddenly went limp.

"Let the fool up!" the spectacled man ordered sharply. "Make no more noise than necessary. Fritz step into the hall and keep your eyes open. He may not have been alone, and I must find out who he is and who sent him."

Silk was only dimly aware of being picked up and thrown down on the flat top of the sturdy table in the ante-room. His only advantage—and it may have been temporary—was that he had thrust the automatic under his vest before passing out. Somebody now slapped his face smartly, and he tried to open his eyes.

The angry leader, shaken and clothing awry, snarled at his assistants.

"Get back to your search in the committee room," he ordered. "I will attend to this fine fellow."

Silk managed to open his eyes sufficiently to watch the thugs hasten back into the other office. The glimpse he got of the chamber showed they had certainly been searching diligently for something. Every article of furniture had been opened or smashed and shoved around. A wall ventilator had been ripped away, the rug had been rolled up, curtains had been jerked

down, and even a radiator had been broken from its base.

But Silk had little time for contemplation on this savage ruthlessness. His tormentor had drawn a suspicious looking flask from his pocket and was now pouring some of its contents into a small glass.

"*Dumkopf* that you are," he complained. "I have to waste this good *schnapps* on you to bring you around for questioning. I—"

SILK figured this to be the right moment for his escape. . As the man with the flask finished filling the tumbler Silk snatched his gun from beneath his vest, hastily sat up, and fired at the bottle. The flask shattered into fragments, but the man was not without a certain resourcefulness. He dashed the contents of the glass straight into his prisoner's face.

This settled Silk and scuttled his chances. Blinded, he was swiftly disarmed and made secure.

"Now," panted the leader, thoroughly enraged, "before I let my men tear you apart, my wily friend, you tell me why you came here and who you are. *Shnell!*"

"I came here to look for the same thing you don't seem able to find," said Silk coolly, playing for time.

This statement galvanized his captor. "What? Who told you about the watch? How did you know what its secret is? Who are you?"

"You'd be surprised," said Silk, at last beginning to see a little through watery, burning eyes.

The other bit off a curse and called to one of his men.

"This is no place to question this man. He knows something dangerous. If he came here to find the watch, perhaps others will come. Take him away."

"Of course, Excellency," the big man agreed. "But it will be difficult. We must do it so no one can suspect and try to stop us. Wait—I have it. Today I watched three men carried away from



Silk

this building in a truck from the morgue. If we could get one of those."

The spectacled man nodded eagerly. "Sometimes," he said, "you show that you were born with a few brains. Watch him!"

The spectacled man walked over to a phone, thumbed through the phone book and then dialed a number.

"This is Officer Grogan. There is a dead man in the Falkner Building—a suicide. You will send out at once, please. Yes, another suicide."

He hung up, turned around and smiled at Silk. "You see, we are clever, too. When the truck from the morgue arrives, the attendants will carry the basket into the lobby. My men will be waiting. They will take the uniforms of the attendants, put you in the basket and carry you out. Simple, is it not? No one can possibly suspect that you are being kidnaped. Or perhaps you might prefer to talk here? I guarantee it would be easier if you did."

"Easier how?" Silk snorted. "You'd put a bullet through my skull maybe, instead of torturing me. No, thanks—I want to live as long as possible even if I have to suffer. And you know, it might be a novelty riding in a morgue wagon at that."

The spectacled man jerked his head to the left. One of his thugs grinned, stepped behind Silk and brought down

his fist. Silk felt a terrific explosion and things turned black. He slumped out of the davenport on to the floor.

WHILE these three men worked with astonishing dispatch, Silk remained unconscious. He didn't recover consciousness until the jolting of the morgue wagon began banging his head against the wooden block used as a pillow in the basket. Silk came back to his senses with the full realization of what had happened. He put the flat of his hands against the lid of the basket and pushed, but the straps had been firmly affixed and he couldn't budge it. There was plenty of air, but Silk needed more than oxygen. He knew too well what fate was in store for him.

The truck stopped, someone opened the door and the basket, with Silk inside, was hauled out. He heard voices as he felt himself being carried into a house.

"Take the truck and run it off a bridge into the river. Be sure no one sees you do this."

Someone loosened the straps, and Silk blinked in the rays of a light directly above his head. The spectacled man called "Excellency" peered down at him.

"Shall we save ourselves trouble and dispatch you at once or will you, perhaps, talk a little?"

Stall that was Silk's one hope for life. He did some rapid thinking in the next minute.

"I'll talk," he declared sullenly. "Let me out of here first."

Silk was hauled out of the basket, watched by two men and led over to a chair. He sat down, pressed his hand against his temples and groaned. The spectacled man stood above him, looking down with an unspoken question written on his face.

"I was after the watch," Silk said and wondered just what kind of a watch it was and what significance it had in this odd case. He determined to try a shot

in the dark. "You don't think those other boys kept it a secret, do you?"

The spectacled man smiled smugly. "So those fools, Lockhart and his crew of super-patriotic nit-wits, hired more than three agents. But no matter. You have chosen to defy us, lost miserably, and your fate is death!"

He turned and spoke in a foreign tongue to the other two men. Silk sensed that the manner of his death was being described. He couldn't afford to wait any longer. The next act might have an abrupt curtain so far as he was concerned. He suddenly came out of that chair like a catapult.

One of the bigger men made a lunge for him, but Silk avoided that like a weasel might slip around a charging elephant. He hit the spectacled man head on, drove him back against the wall and tried a short jab to the chin. This had to be finished fast, before the other two hulking brutes could gather together their wits and enter the action.

But the spectacled man was light on his feet and though he didn't pack much of a punch, he squirmed out of Silk's embrace, danced lightly away like an expert swordsman and waited for Silk to charge again. Silk started a lunge, checked himself and saw his victim leap to the right.

HE changed his tactics promptly and let go with a long, looping right. It caught the man on the cheek, bobbed his head over and forced a cry of pain from his lips.

Silk forgot the other two men. He closed in, hammered another pair of jabs and then gave the man a violent shove. He whirled, streaked for the door and had his hand on the knob when a chair came down in a direct collision with his skull. He emitted a sigh as his knees buckled under him.

Dazed, but still conscious, Silk could offer no resistance when he was stuffed back into the wicker basket. He heard the straps draw tight, and then the basket was picked up and carried out-

side. The basket was propped up against the rear seat of a car. The motor roared, and Silk lost all hope.

Then, vaguely, Silk heard a shot. The motor of the car ceased roaring and dropped to a low purr. He heard the two hulking men start running toward the house. There was no mistaking their heavy feet pounding on the gravel driveway.

The spectacled man emerged from the house, pistol in hand. He directed a search of the premises that took fifteen minutes. There was no sign of whoever had fired that single shot.

"Bah," the spectacled man growled. "It was perhaps a hunter discharging his gun for the sake of hearing it explode. No one knows of this place. There can be no spying interlopers in the vicinity. Back to your work. Take that fool to the river. Throw into the basket as much scrap iron as you can find. Rock will do if you cannot find anything else. Then drop the basket and all into the river. Hurry—I have other work for you. Where's Freidrich? Why does he not come when I so order it?"

The two men trotted back to the car. One made sure the wicker morgue basket was still there and that someone was inside. They headed north on the highway, parked well off the road and beside a swiftly moving river. The basket was hauled out, dropped on the ground and the two men began accumulating a heap of good-sized rocks.

Finally one of them unstrapped the lid of the basket. In the darkness he could see only a shadowy form lying very still inside. They began dropping the rocks into the basket, half-covering their victim until they were sure enough weight had been added to keep the corpse on the river bottom for weeks.

One of the men was unable to resist the temptation of taunting his victim. "It is fitting," he said in a gruff, accented voice, "that you die like this. You even have a casket. Are we not



Carol

kind to think of that?"

There was no reply. The big man reached inside the basket and seized his victim by the throat. He let go suddenly, pulled his hand back as though his fingers had touched molten steel. Something dripped off them.

"Himmel—blood! Otto—a match, quickly!"

The other spy scraped a match, held it high and for a moment both men were certain this must be some wild figment of a dream. The man who lay in the basket was Freidrich, the valet of his excellency. There was a bullet hole directly between his eyes and pasted just above it was the black image of a bat, wings spread in flight.

CHAPTER V

McGrath Comes Close



WHEN the Bat heard that telephone call come in, he went into swift action. There was one sure way of checking on the corpse at the Falkner Building. He beat the morgue attendants to their wagon, opened the rear door and discovered that the inside of the truck

consisted of two compartments. The wicker basket occupied one and above it was another space for a second victim. Only a rolled up stretcher occupied this niche. He hauled himself up, squeezed his bulk into this upper compartment and pulled the door shut after him. Half a minute later the truck rolled away.

There was no window in the rear door and the Bat could only pray that he was being taken to the right destination. Moments later, the basket was taken out and he had a glimpse of the busy street in front of the Falkner Building. He weighed the idea of slipping out and invading the offices of the Society Americana, but gave it up for two reasons. There was no crowd; there was no policeman in evidence. This looked like a trap of some sort.

Minutes went by and the Bat's limbs ached from being cramped up. Then the rear door opened again and the basket was slipped inside. The Bat glimpsed the faces of the men who handled it. He knew instantly what had happened. The real attendants had been disposed of and their places taken by a couple of killers. He wondered if Silk were inside the basket and if he was still alive. The Bat slipped the hood from over one side of his head, cocked his ear and listened. Faint, hoarse breathing reached his extraordinarily acute hearing organs. Whoever was in the basket lived.

This ride took the better part of an hour before the truck stopped. The Bat waited until the basket was hauled out and an intense silence fell. Then he slipped out himself, stretched for a few seconds and got his bearings. He was somewhere in a suburban section and behind a fairly good-sized single family dwelling. Lights blazed on the first floor.

He crept toward a window, raised his head cautiously and through heavy curtains that were parted only a crack, he had a fair view of the interior. His

heart gave an exultant leap when he saw Silk, alive and apparently bluffing his way along. The Bat still watched when Silk swung into action and was rapped on the head with a chair. To invade the place now would probably have been dangerous. There were four men in the room and all well armed.

But from the moment that Silk crashed to the floor, the Bat's automatic was trained on the spectacled man. He watched Silk thrown into the wicker basket. Orders were being given two huge, apelike men. The Bat pressed his ear against the window and made out enough of the conversation to realize what was going on.

He slipped quietly back from the house. He heard a snarl, the sound of a heavy chain being dragged along the ground and then a dog barked viciously. Half a minute later the rear door opened and a man emerged, holding a gun in his fist. He called soothingly to the dog, but the animal had the Bat's scent and kept up an incessant baying. The man walked over to the beast, unhooked his chain and, gripping one end of it, let the dog pull him. The animal headed straight for the spot where the Bat was hiding.

With a sudden lunge the dog tore itself free of the man's grasp, gave a leap and sailed over a low bush. He saw the Bat's crouched form, snarled and attacked. As the vicious beast was hurtling through the air, the Bat hastily reversed his gun, holding it by the barrel. He brought it down in a hard blow that clipped the beast on the head. The dog crashed to the ground.

"YOU will not move!" a grating voice warned, and the Bat looked up into the gaping muzzle of a gun. "Stand erect and raise your hands. Drop your gun."

The Bat obeyed all the orders except the last one. He still held his automatic by the barrel. He sidestepped around the bush and light from one

of the windows fell upon him. His captor gave an involuntary gasp of terror, for the Bat inspired fear. His rib-winged cloak gave him the illusion of being in flight.

Suddenly the Bat tossed his automatic into the air about two feet. As it came down, his hand snaked out, grasped it by the butt and his finger curled around the trigger. The man who had him covered gave a croaking shout and began to squeeze the trigger. But the Bat was faster. His gun blazed the split-second that it landed in his hand. A single bullet sped true. The man toppled without a sound.

Working fast, the Bat hoisted the man to one shoulder, made a dive into the underbrush that surrounded this house and was scampering toward the front when the other three occupants began their hunt. He saw the car parked, the motor running. The rear door was open and he spotted the wicker basket inside.

He sped toward the car, laid his burden down gently and hauled out the basket. He opened it, signaled the amazed Silk to be quiet and helped him out. They stuffed the dead man into the basket, replaced it in the back of the car and then faded away into the darkness. The man called "Excellency" bolted out of the house, drove a car out of the garage and vanished.

"I thought I was sunk that time," Silk panted. "I still can't understand how you found me."

The Bat laughed softly. "I was literally above you most of the time—in the upper compartment of the morgue wagon. But all this has got us nowhere. I don't even know who that spectacled man—who certainly seems to be important—can be. Did you learn, Silk?"

"They called him 'Excellency' so he must be important," Silk said. "I did hear something else that's plain Greek to me so far. They tried to make me tell why I busted into the offices of the Society Americana. I saw that they

had been searching the place so I said I came for the same thing they were looking for, and right away that smooth guy asked me how I knew about the watch. I don't know what watch they meant so I shut up."

"A watch?" The Bat frowned. "It ties up, Silk. Rigby made a very peculiar statement to me just before he was killed. He said that all he'd learned so far was that pocket-watches fly. It made no sense to me then—little more now. However, there is one thing we must do immediately. Tonight I got the fingerprints of the man who plunged to his death from the window of the Society Americana. We're going to invade Lockhart's residence and look for something that would normally bear his fingerprints."

Silk gaped. "Then you think, maybe, that Lockhart isn't dead? That the body which fell out of the window was somebody else?"

The Bat trudged along beside Silk, occasionally grabbing his arm and guiding him away from large rocks or stumps hidden by darkness that didn't exist to the Bat's eyes.

"Look, Silk," he said thoughtfully. "Sloane and Collier were murdered in a locked office. They had walked in under their own power, and therefore they were alive when the door was closed and locked by Detective Allen. Someone in that office must have killed them. How it was done, I don't know—yet. I've learned that two people are missing. One is Lockhart, who is supposed to be dead. The other is a man named Fisk who rushed out of the office and disappeared. Maybe he is the killer, but until I'm sure that it's Lockhart's body that is in the morgue, I'm not throwing away that angle. Better go into that farmhouse and phone Butch. Have him drive out as quickly as possible."

THE Bat begrudged the hour it took for Butch to put in an appearance. Things were moving rap-

idly in this case and he still hadn't the faintest idea as to what it was all about. Righy's weird statement about flying watches and now Silk's astounding tale of a missing watch had some connection, but what did it mean? The manner of death suffered by the two men at the meeting of the Society was another element of mystery.

Like the medical examiner, the Bat couldn't fathom why two normally healthy men would permit hypodermic needles to be inserted into their necks without putting up some kind of an objection. Hydrocyanic acid works horribly fast, but not so rapidly as to prevent a victim from crying out in pain from the insertion of a needle. Fisk's disappearance complicated things, and the only information the Bat had on that subject was newspaper items.

Lockhart's battered head indicated that at least part of his wounds had been inflicted before he plunged to the sidewalk. The Bat had a well formed notion that once he got his teeth into this case, he'd still find it intensely difficult to solve. Men who can murder as these killers had done possessed, of necessity, an excellent knowledge of poisons and toxicology.

A car rolled at a moderate speed down the highway. Its headlights winked on and off occasionally, when the driver was sure no other cars were in sight. Behind the wheel was Butch O'Leary, his huge body pressed against the wheel, his battered hat far to the back of his head and his ample mouth slightly open.

Then he saw an eerie form emerge from the side of the road. Wings were outspread and Butch no longer wondered why he had seen killers quail before this apparition. Even Butch felt a thrill, and he knew the man who was concealed beneath that hood and cloak.

Butch braked to a stop, the Bat and Silk piled in. The Bat leaned forward.

"Nice work, Butch. Take us to Lockhart's house. It's on Longacre

Road. Stop a block away, let us out and then turn the corner and wait."

"Right you are, Boss," Butch said happily. "Been huntin'?"

"We bagged one bird and didn't even have time to find out what species he was." The Bat chuckled. "Before we're done, I think there will be good use for your fists, Butch. You'll be pitted against a couple of men as big as you."

Butch grunted in pleasure. "Just lemme at 'em, that's all I ask. I'll flatten both of 'em with one punch right on top of their skulls."

Butch drove well, covering the distance at a fast clip and yet attracting no attention from speed cops. He reached his destination, let the Bat and Silk out and then parked as ordered.

The Bat vaulted a hedge and landed on the front lawn of Lockhart's town house. Silk followed and they slipped forward cautiously. Only a dim hall light burned in the house since it was well after midnight.

HE touched Silk's arm. "Stay here and watch," he said. "I'll go inside. If anyone comes, throw some gravel against yonder window. I'll hear it even if I'm on the other side of the house."

The Bat crept up on the front porch. He listened intently, heard no signs of life and proceeded to force the door open with a slim piece of steel that left no marks when used by his skilled hands. He stepped into the hallway, saw stairs leading to the floor above and went up with no more noise than a hawk swooping down on its prey. His objective was Lockhart's bedroom. There he was bound to find plenty of objects that must bear the dead man's fingerprints.

He invaded the room quietly, needed no light to make his way about and stopped before a dresser upon which were several silver-backed brushes. He used one of Lockhart's silk hand-

kerchiefs to wrap these in, entered a private bathroom and appropriated three bottles containing, respectively, hair tonic, powder, and after-shave lotion. These he also carefully wrapped. On a small bedside table he found a chrome-plated thermos jar and helped himself to this as well.

With his borrowed articles tucked

can't see it yet, but Lieutenant McGrath's car is parked in front. We've got to use our wits this time. He's found no one at home and I'm betting he's been parked there for a long time—ever since I taunted him a bit at the morgue. Butch, drop us around the corner. Then go to a phone booth. Better use one in a busy all-night store where nobody is apt to notice you. Phone Police Headquarters, say you're the Bat and leave a message to the effect that you're very sorry for the trick you pulled on McGrath tonight."



As the man with the flask finished filling the tumbler Silk snatched his gun from beneath his vest, hastily sat up, and fired at the bottle
(Chapter IV)

under his cloak, he left the house as unobtrusively as he had entered. Silk joined him and they hurried to where Butch was parked. Ten minutes later they headed down the street toward Tony Quinn's home.

The Bat leaned forward suddenly. "Go right on by the house, Butch. You

"Right, Boss," Butch said.

He turned the corner and the Bat and Silk hopped out. As they headed toward the gate near the garden house, the Bat stripped off his hood and robe,

rolled them into a bundle around Lockhart's personal toilet articles. He handed this to Silk.

"Use the tunnel. Get into the house and take your clothes off. Climb into your pajamas and say you were asleep and didn't hear McGrath knocking. Disconnect the doorbell if you have time. You don't know what happened to me. Step on it, Silk."

Silk darted into the garden house, raised a cleverly hidden trap door and slid down a ladder to the tunnel. Tony Quinn, no longer the Bat now, picked an old, discarded cane from a corner of the garden house. A film seemed to gather over his eyes and he became apparently blind once more. He heard someone plowing through brush and he stepped out of the garden house, tapping his cane in front of him.

"Who is there?" he called out. "Who is it? What do you want?"

McGRATH turned a flashlight full on Tony Quinn's face, but even that sudden change of light didn't make Quinn blink. He didn't even seem to notice it and his eyes were turned in another direction.

"Hello, Tony Quinn," McGrath said mockingly, and his face was drawn in harsh lines. "Been out for quite some time, haven't you? By chance it isn't possible that you included the City Morgue in your nocturnal ramble a couple of hours ago and stuck a gun in my face."

"Lieutenant McGrath," Quinn sighed, visibly relaxing. "You gave me quite a start. I thought for a moment you might be a burglar. What did you say about a gun and the City Morgue?"

"Where," McGrath demanded, "is that slinky, bald-headed butler of yours? Why doesn't he answer the door? I'll tell you why. Because he hasn't been home either. He's been out helping you and he's still out. All I hope is that he slipped in through the front door. I tied a piece of thread

across it and I'll know if he got in all right. Looks like it's all up with you, Mister Black Bat."

Quinn put a friendly, groping hand and found McGrath's shoulder. The light still glared in his face, but his eyes were filmed and unblinking.

"Lieutenant," he said in a mildly remonstrative voice, "I really don't know what you're talking about. I've been sitting in the garden house for well over an hour. My valet felt indisposed and went to bed. Won't you come in?"

"You bet I will," grated the lieutenant.

McGrath automatically took Quinn's arm when he stumbled over a length of garden hose. Doubts still lurked in McGrath's mind. If Quinn wasn't blind, the glare of the flashlight should have made him turn away. He shouldn't have tripped over the hose for it was in plain view even in the darkness, lying like a thick black serpent across the cement driveway. Quinn led him to the rear door, used a key to open it and went inside.

"Norton," he called out in a loud voice. "Norton, where the devil are you?"

There was no answer. Quinn gripped McGrath's arm. "Something must have happened to him. His room is to the left of the butler's pantry. Hurry—please!"

McGrath flung open the door of Silk's room, snapped on the lights and stared at the bed. Silk was just sitting up, rubbing his eyes and he looked as though he had been roused out of a sound sleep.

"Norton, are you there? Are you all right?" Quinn asked and had to repress an urge to grin. Silk was a perfect actor.

"Why didn't you answer the door?" McGrath growled savagely.

Silk paid no attention to either of them until he turned his head their way and then he started up in amazement. He cocked his head to one side.

"What? Did you say something? I—oh—sorry, sir. Just a moment. I put these in to keep out the noise. My head was splitting."

He removed a pair of ear stoppers, placed them carefully on his dresser and donned a robe.

McGrath snorted, sped to the front door and opened it. He waved his hand through what seemed to be thin air and felt the black silk thread break. He slammed the door hard and turned around to face Quinn.

"It seems I'm always wrong," he growled. "I'll admit I did see lights go on and off a couple of times, but I figured you had some kind of a set-up arranged to take care of that. I—"

HERE the phone buzzed and Silk answered it. He handed the instrument to McGrath. "For you, sir."

McGrath almost barked into the transmitter. Then he listened and hung up with a crash of metal.

"Well," he said with a sigh, "when I'm wrong, I'm the first to admit it. The Bat just called Headquarters and left a message for me. Therefore he can't be you—eh, Quinn? You know this Black Bat has plenty of good qualities. He never permits anyone to take the blame for something he's done. Those little stickers he leaves around brand his deeds. Well, I'll run along."

Silk picked up McGrath's hat and presented it with a flourish. As McGrath went out, Silk pressed the door bell button. There was no response.

"I see now why I didn't hear your ring, sir. Something must have happened to the bell."

McGrath jammed on his hat and left. Silk closed the door, leaned against it and drew the sleeve of his robe across his forehead.

"Close, sir. Closer than I like to think. One of these days McGrath will trap you. He's getting smarter."

Quinn walked into his study, lit a cigarette and sat down in his accus-

tomed chair before the fireplace. "You know, Silk, he keeps my wits sharply tuned. And I think he rather enjoys the little game, himself."

Silk placed an ash tray handy and grinned. Then he sobered. "McGrath said something about lights being turned on and off. I didn't do that, sir. Someone must have been here."

Quinn's cigarette fell to the floor as he arose with a jerk. Then the secret door of his laboratory opened a crack. Silk reached for a heavy candelstick holder as a weapon. But he put it down again a moment later. Framed in the doorway was a girl, smiling broadly and extending both hands toward Quinn.

"Carol!" Quinn said happily.

Carol let him take her hands.

"It's I," she admitted. "I got Silk's call to stand by. Butch was summoned and I wondered what was going on, so—I took a little walk. Lo and behold, I saw Lieutenant McGrath drive up and almost push his finger through the doorbell. I slipped around the estate, used the tunnel and got in the house. I turned lights on and off a couple of times to alibi Silk and you, Tony."

Quinn said nothing for a few moments, content to look down into her sparkling eyes.

CHAPTER VI

Grenade Trap



TWENTY minutes later Carol, Quinn and Silk were in the secret laboratory. Quinn carefully dusted the various articles he had taken from the Lockhart home. Finger prints came out, finely

etched by the powder. Using a powerful magnifying glass, Quinn studied them. Then he turned to the card which bore the prints of the dead man in the morgue, the man who had fallen or

leaped from the window of the Society Americana and had been tentatively identified as Lockhart.

"As I thought," he said, looking up, "the finger prints are different. Lockhart, in the privacy of his home, left his prints around. But these do not match those I took from the fingers of the corpse. Therefore it obviously was not Lockhart's body that hurtled to the sidewalk. Lockhart must be alive—which means he knows something."

"I think he's the head of this spy ring," Silk put in. "But I sure wish I knew what he's up to. So far we've been working in the dark too much and whatever they're doing, we haven't impeded the spies very much."

Quinn nodded and glanced at his watch. "It's two A.M.," he said. "A few more hours of darkness. Get my things ready, Silk. I'm going out alone this time because I don't believe this particular job will be dangerous. I'm going to have a little talk with Fouquet and Brooks—the two surviving members of the committee who were present when Sloane and Collier died. I'm particularly interested in getting some line on Fisk, who has disappeared, and on Lockhart who seems to be dead and isn't. Carol be ready for trouble. Once I get a definite lead, I'm sure there will be work for you."

Quinn drew on his cape and hood, thrust two automatics into specially designed pockets in his black suit and with a nod to Carol and Silk, slipped through the entrance to the tunnel and vanished. He discovered that Butch had located and returned the cheap coupé which Quinn had left near the morgue. He got behind the wheel and chose quiet, deserted side streets to travel far uptown toward the home of Pierre Fouquet.

The house was shrouded by darkness. He attacked the rear door after making certain it wasn't wired to an alarm system. Entering with his usual skill, he crossed the kitchen, passed through a butler's pantry and reached

a spacious reception hall. He slipped up the stairway to the bedrooms, investigated two of them before he found the one occupied by Fouquet. Grimly approaching the bed, he had his gun ready to menace Fouquet and prevent any impulsive outcry.

The Bat touched the shoulder of the well covered sleeping man, but Fouquet didn't awaken. He shook him hard and then noticed that Fouquet lay on his stomach and that there was a big bulge in the covers just below his shoulders. The Bat's blood ran icy cold as he pulled the covers down. A gruff ejaculation indicated his surprise. Fouquet was dead! A knife had been driven hilt deep into his back. He probably died without ever knowing what had happened.

"If Fouquet was murdered, then Hugh Brooks' life is in danger also. Perhaps the lawyer, Durrance, will be threatened too because he was present at that last meeting," the Bat told himself grimly.

He took no time to look for clues. Instead he bolted out of the house, raced to his car and jumped in. Hugh Brooks' home was only a few blocks away. Durrance lived clear across town. The Bat vaulted a hedge that enclosed Brooks' estate, ran lightly up on the front porch and peered through the big, wide windows looking into the living room.

Although that room was dark, the Bat's super-sensitive eyes clearly distinguished everything in it. He noticed that chairs had been carelessly shoved back and that a vase of flowers had been overturned on a library table. The water still dripped onto the rug.

HE waited to see no more. He grabbed up a porch chair, swung it and crashed a window. He pulled out pieces of glass, moved the lock and opened the window. As he slipped through, he heard rapid footsteps of at least three men racing down the stairs. The Bat's both hands moved fast,

whipped out his guns and when the first man barged into the living room with spitting weapon, the Bat was prepared. Both guns blazed. The man doubled up with a screech of pain and fell headlong on the floor.

Other guns roared. A bullet streaked by the Bat's head, buried itself in the wall an inch behind him and showered his hood with plaster. He fired another salvo from his two automatics, aiming at the thick velvet drapes that masked each side of the doorway. One of the drapes moved, billowing out like a balloon being inflated. Then a man's form hit the floor. He rolled sluggishly over just once and didn't move again.

A dark form bolted from behind the other curtain and began racing upstairs. The Bat was after him in a flash. Once the fleeing man fired over his shoulder, but he was hindered by the darkness through which the Bat was hardly visible. The bullet missed by a good three feet. The Bat could have shot this man down easily for darkness meant nothing to his eyes. However, he held his fire. He wanted to take this man alive.

At the top of the stairs the running man veered sharply to the left, let out a wild yell of warning and darted into one of the bedrooms. The Bat heard glass break, but he kept on going. He had to find Brooks.

A streak of flame from the muzzle of a gun ripped through the night. The Bat returned the fire and heard someone duck back into one room, slam the door and hastily lock it. Without the slightest hesitation the Bat flitted by the door, stopped and edged back. He put the muzzle of one gun against the lock, blew it to pieces and pushed the door wide open.

Someone moaned feebly inside. Fresh, cool night air swept across the Bat's hooded face. His eyes penetrated the gloom, saw Hugh Brooks lying across the bed, his wrists and ankles lashed to the springs. There was no one else in the room.

The Bat raced toward the window, looked out and saw two shadowy forms running madly toward the rear of the estate. Then he turned back to Brooks, made a quick examination and saw that he had been subjected to torture by the knife. The sadistic artist had slashed fine lines across his chest and abdomen. The Bat quickly released the victim. Brooks sat up with a groan, clutched at the Bat's arm and tried to see what his rescuer looked like. The Bat reached over and turned on a light.

Brooks started back in renewed terror at the sight of a man hooded and caped in somber black. The Bat spoke

[Turn Page]

THE AWAKENING OF MR. A.



MR. A.: Whew! I hate the very thought of having to take a cathartic.

MR. B.: You wouldn't if you'd only try Ex-Lax. It tastes swell — just like chocolate.



MR. A.: Why, that's what we give to the youngsters. What I need is dynamite!

MR. B.: Don't kid yourself! Ex-Lax is plenty effective, but it won't upset you.



LATER
MR. A.: Boy, I feel like a million this morning! That Ex-Lax sure is great stuff!

MR. B.: You said it, pal! We've been using Ex-Lax in our family for 30 years!

The action of Ex-Lax is thorough, yet gentle! No shock. No strain. No weakening after-effects. Just an easy, comfortable bowel movement that brings blessed relief. Try Ex-Lax the next time you need a laxative. It's good for every member of the family

10¢ and 25¢



in a low, soothing voice to Brooks.

"Don't be afraid of me. I've come to help and it looks as though I arrived just in time. Mind if I use your telephone a moment?"

"Who—who are you?" Brooks asked. He was quickly regaining the cool composure that characterized him. "Whoever you are, I'm very grateful. In another moment those men would have driven a knife into my heart."

THE Bat dialed a number. "I'm the Black Bat," he told Brooks while he waited for the connection to be completed. Then a sleepy voice answered at the other end of the wire. The Bat asked: "Durrance? I'm a friend. A few moments ago Fouquet was murdered and Hugh Brooks was almost killed. I have reason to believe that you may be next on the list. If you have a gun, get it and watch yourself. I'll explain everything shortly. When you hear a knock on your front door—four quick raps, two longer ones and then one fast one again—you will know it is me, the Black Bat!"

The Bat hung up and grinned behind his mask. Hugh Brooks stared at him as though he were a ghost.

"So you're the Bat," he finally managed. "I understood you were some kind of a great criminal, but I'll never believe that again. I owe my life to you."

"I've got to talk fast," the Bat said. "What did those men want to know?"

Brooks lit a cigarette with steady hands. "The oddest thing, Bat. They insisted that I knew what happened to a watch. They subjected me to some rather ghastly torture until one of them a big fellow with glasses decided that I was telling the truth when I denied any knowledge of a watch. He had just ordered my death when that window crashed downstairs. I—say, you didn't see anything of a couple of thick-set men around, did you? Joe Allen's detective agency was supposed to be

guarding me. All of us on the committee have guards."

The Bat hurried into the hallway, stood at the top of the stairs and motioned Brooks, who had followed, to be very quiet. His acute ears heard the sound of hoarse breathing. He raced down the stairs, stepped up to a wardrobe in the hall and found that it was locked. The key was on the outside and he opened it. Two bound and gagged figures rolled onto the floor.

"There they are," the Bat told Brooks. "I'll leave them for you to work on. Better see that they keep their eyes open from now on. And get some medical attention for your chest."

The Bat left via the front door and drove straight to Durrance's home. Like the others, this house told of wealth and influence. There was a spacious yard in front and a veritable estate at the rear. Lights were on all over the place. The Bat stepped upon the front porch, rapped the signal on the door and waited.

A bolt clicked and he heard the sound of rapidly retreating feet. He turned the door knob carefully, pushed the door open about an inch and felt a very light pressure against it. He frowned, wondered what this could be and where Durrance was. He put his foot against the panel, gave the door a hard shove and then his brain clicked.

He gave a single leap that carried him off the porch and into a neatly trimmed bush. As he hit the ground, the whole front of the house seemed to be hurled out at him. There was a terrific explosion and a wave of flame and smoke. Debris fell all around him. A thick chunk of wood slapped down against his spine and made him gasp in pain. When he got to his feet cautiously, he found a fire raging in what was left of the front hall.

ONLY the Bat's quick action had saved his life. As the door was flung wide from his kick, he had glimpsed a hand grenade tied to a chair

with a cord hooked to its pin and leading to a thumb screw inserted in the wall. The other end of the cord was attached to the door so that when it opened, the cord would automatically tighten and draw the firing pin. It was a neat, deadly trap.

No one but Durrance had known the Bat was to come calling, knew the pre-arranged signal and would slip back the bolts in answer to it.

He heard excited voices from neighboring houses, but he didn't run for it yet. It was possible Durrance might have been already threatened when the Bat reached him by phone. If he was a prisoner in this house, he'd be doomed, for fire was rapidly sweeping through the place. Protected somewhat by his hood and cape, the Bat plunged into the flames, negotiated a path across the shattered floor of the hall and ran up the stairs to the second floor. His nostrils quivered. Above the smell of the smoke he detected the pungent odor of gasoline. The house had been turned into a fire trap.

Above the rapidly increasing crackle of flame he heard a pounding against the upstairs floor. Unerringly he located the room from which it came, darted inside and saw a burly man, trussed up and gagged. He lay on the floor and there was a bloody welt across his forehead.

The Bat quickly untied him. When he ripped away the gag, the prisoner tried to speak, but his tongue was swollen and his mouth too dry for speech. He bobbed his head in a gesture of thanks even though his eyes betrayed a lurking terror at the sight of this grim black-robed figure.

"Anyone else in the house?" the Bat demanded. "Is Durrance here?"

The man tried to talk again and reverted to a vigorous negative shake of his head.

"Get downstairs as fast as you can," the Bat ordered. "Don't try to reach the front door. Use the rear! Hurry!"

As the man turned away, his coat opened and the Bat saw a glimpse of a nickle-plated badge. This then, was another of Joe Allen's private detective operatives.

Sirens were whining outside and in a few moments it would be dawn. The Bat had little time to waste. He yanked open dresser drawers at random, looking for some kind of a clue that would attest Durrance's innocence or guilt.

Suddenly, above the confusion outside and the ever-mounting crackle of flame, he heard the distinct report of a gun. It was followed by a scream and then another shot. The Bat raced to a window overlooking the rear of the estate. He saw a dark figure sprawled out on the lawn. The Bat raised the window, climbed out to a small, deeply slanted roof and slid down it. He checked his descent by digging his heels into the gutter drain.

Then he carefully lowered himself. Dangling four feet above the ground, he glanced down to see what he'd land on. Something smashed against the metal drain pipe and the bark of the same gun reached his ears. Now he was the target for the hidden assassin. He let go, dropped to the ground.

NO more bullets menaced him and he had a weapon in his own fist. He stopped beside the sprawled figure, knelt and made a brief examination. It was the private detective he had freed. The man was quite dead. One bullet had plowed through his chest, the other had caught him directly between the eyes.

The Bat heard heavy footsteps coming around the side of the house. He made a flying leap for the protection of the dark bushes and crouched there. Then, slowly and carefully, he edged a path around the house, describing a very wide arc to avoid detection by the firemen who swarmed all over the place and the police who were engaged in dragging the corpse of the private

detective to a much safer spot.

Someone in a light dressing gown and white pajamas ran up the walk. Despite the confusion and the flickering, deceptive light from the flaming house, the Bat recognized this man. It was Hugh Brooks!

CHAPTER VII

Hugo—the Poisoner



MID-AFTERNOON the following day, Silk awoke Tony Quinn by shaking him vigorously.

"Police Commissioner Warner and another man have just arrived," he warned. "There goes the door bell now."

Quinn hastily jumped out of bed, sent Silk downstairs to stall his visitors while he donned his baggy tweeds. He brushed his teeth, combed his hair and picked up his cane. His eyes, which had been so sparkling and alive, became filmy and staring after the manner of the blind. He tapped his cane on the floor, went down the stairs gripping the bannister tightly and entered his study.

Commissioner Warner, a lithe, handsome man who didn't look his fifty-odd years, hurried over to him, took Quinn's arm and piloted him to his accustomed chair in front of the fireplace. Quinn's eyes stared blankly into space, but he was studying the second visitor intently enough. He proved to be about Warner's age and there was a deep, worried furrow written on his forehead.

"Tony," Warner said, "I want you to meet Michael Igoe who is head of a specially created counter-espionage division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation."

Quinn extended a hand blindly. Igoe shook it and then sat down by

Quinn's side. He spoke in a calm, unemotional voice.

"Mr. Quinn, Commissioner Warner accompanied me here to vouch for me. You were visited by Rigby, who used to work under me and was a very competent man. I think that hit-and-run driver who killed him, committed cold-blooded murder to silence Rigby. I have thought so doubly, since two other of my former agents were murdered.

"You must know all about this, for the newspapers have made quite a field day of it. I also know that Lieutenant McGrath questioned you, but Warner tells me there is a certain animosity between you and McGrath—that he has some silly idea you are the Black Bat. I wish to heaven you were. We could use a man like that in this particular case. What I want to know is what Rigby told you before he died. Why did he come here?"

Quinn's blank, unwinking eyes stared about two feet to the left of the federal agent. There was a slight smile on his scarred face. "I held nothing back from McGrath. Rigby and I handled a spy case several years ago. There was a murder involved and I took jurisdiction. The spy killers were sent to the electric chair and the case ended there. Rigby wondered if one of those men hadn't mentioned something to me that would give him a lead in connection with his present investigation. Unfortunately, they didn't."

Igoe's shoulders drooped. "Our last resort," he told Warner. "We're stumped completely. Where it will all wind up no one can foresee, but if, by some chance, this country should become mixed up in war, we'd be terribly menaced. Those spies know as much as we do." He paused and eyed Warner with an open question in his eyes. Warner nodded. Igoe continued.

"The plans of the industrial mobilization so carefully planned by the War Department have been stolen.

With them, the spy ring can plan far ahead, prepare their saboteurs and create havoc."

Tony Quinn whistled softly. "The Industrial Mobilization Plans? It is serious, Mr. Igoe."

Commissioner Warner arose, put a friendly hand on Quinn's shoulder and looked down at him. "What you have been told is, of course, in the strictest confidence, Tony. I informed Mr. Igoe that you could be implicitly trusted. But how I wish McGrath was right about you. That you were The Black Bat. There is so much he could do, unhampered by red tape and laws. There is Fisk to be found. Last night Durrance vanished after part of his house was blown up by a bomb and the rest of it gutted by fire."

TONY Quinn's expression did not change. "If I were the Bat," he said calmly, "I should certainly do what I could. This is a matter for any right-minded citizen to take part in if he can. However—"

Quinn spread his hands in a gesture of despair. Igoe arose, and Silk bobbed up to show them out. Silk returned to the library to find Quinn tapping his fingers against the arms of his chair.

"Warner more than suspects I am the Bat," he said quietly. "This visit was only to apprise me that the Bat would be given every aid if he would help. Igoe came merely to back up the idea. As if I needed any persuasion. Silk, we've got to locate this spy ring. To do so we must contact some member of the outfit. I have an idea how it can be done. Draw the shades and bring me that book on toxicology."

Silk obeyed the orders promptly. For more than an hour Quinn studied the massive volume, making notes from time to time. Then he slammed the book shut, settled back in his chair and nodded in satisfaction.

"Silk, I think I know how those two agents were murdered in the offices of

the Society Americana. It has been my belief that they did not die of hydrocyanic acid poisoning. When those needles were thrust into their veins, they were already dead. The blood was still fluid enough to take up part of the poison and an autopsy, unless done with another idea in mind, would indicate that they died of this poison. In fact, Silk, I believe those two men were already marked with death when they walked into the meeting."

"Walked in—dead?" Silk gasped.

"Practically that. I read the report of the medical examiner who performed the autopsies. He recorded that he found hydrocyanic acid—enough to cause instant death. There his work stopped because he discovered what he was looking for. But he also indicated that the pupils of the victims' eyes were practically non-existent. There is one poison which will act that way—*physostigma*."

"There is nothing more deadly and a pinhead amount would kill instantly. The ensuing death is gentle and the victim knows nothing—isn't even aware that he is dying. He falls into a coma and the pupils of his eyes rapidly contract. Any ordinary tests for poisons wouldn't show up that drug. The medical examiner made a natural error in not going beyond his initial findings. And *physostigma* is very difficult to detect."

"But how does that lead us to a member of the spy ring?" Silk queried.

"Both agents had eaten a meal just before they died. Both had tapioca for dessert. Now, if a tiny capsule of soluble gelatine could have been mixed with the dessert, they'd have swallowed it unconsciously. If such a capsule were filled with that drug—both men would die very quietly and peacefully when the capsules dissolved in their stomachs. The hypodermic administration of the hydrocyanic acid was only meant to throw an investigation off the trail. If we can find out where those agents ate that last meal, we may

find the poisoner still there. That's your job, Silk. Hop to it—and be careful."

Silk obeyed those orders with alacrity. He never questioned Quinn's inductive reasoning, because it was nearly always amazingly accurate. He disguised himself enough to get by, attended the ceremonies at a funeral chapel where both agents reposed in state, and his glib tongue wangled information out of everyone who would talk. He learned that both agents had been in the habit of dropping into a modest little restaurant only a few blocks from the Falkner Building. Silk went there for supper and ordered tapioca for dessert.

"Sorry, sir," the waiter told him. "It isn't on the menu."

SILK looked up with an annoyed grimace. "But I had some here just a couple of days ago. I like it and, well, I figured there might be some left."

"I'll see," came the quick reply. "We did serve it day before yesterday."

To Silk's relief none remained. He wondered if he could have eaten a dish of it, knowing that two men had died mysteriously after partaking of the same dessert.

"Too bad," he said. "By the way, what's happened to that waiter who served me that day? We had quite a talk. It seems we both come from the same province in Germany."

The waiter tapped his pencil against the side of his nose. Then he smiled. "You must mean Hugo. Pffiefer was his last name. A little man who never spoke much. I'm surprised he opened up to you, sir. He wasn't with us very long and he quit that same day. Didn't even give a reason."

Silk could barely restrain his delight. The Bat's theory was working perfectly.

"I wonder," he asked, "if you could give me his address? He knew some

relatives of mine in Prussia."

The waiter disappeared for a few moments, returned and laid a slip of paper on Silk's table. "There it is, sir. He still lives there because the manager sent one of the men over this morning to see if he wanted to come back to work. Hugo nearly bit his head off. He's got a nasty temper."

Silk folded a five-dollar bill into the waiter's palm and realized he was getting something very cheap. It was night when he emerged to the street. He entered a busy drugstore, dialed Quinn's number and made a brief report.

"Wait on the corner, near Hugo's house," the Bat ordered. "I'll pick you up. Be sure no one spots you."

Silk saw the Bat's cheap coupé rolling down the quiet neighborhood street and signaled it. The Bat stopped and Silk got in. Quinn swiftly pulled his hood over his head, passed an automatic to Silk and then drove around the corner.

"It's a boarding house," Silk reported. "Just a cheap place. Fire escape leads up the back."

"The whole place may be a spies' nest," the Bat said. "We'll have to handle this very carefully. And remember, this Hugo is a murderer with a killer's conscience and worries. He won't hesitate to kill again. See if you can hire a room. If the landlady doesn't chase you away the place ought to be on the level. I'll wait within watching distance. If you get a room, turn the lights out and then raise and lower the curtain twice. If possible, see if you can find out which is Hugo's room."

Silk nodded eagerly and walked back to the house. Minutes passed before the Bat saw lights go on in one room and then, after a brief interval, go out. Then the curtain was raised twice in the signal. Anyone else wouldn't have been able to observe this, but the Bat's eyesight wasn't that of an ordinary person. He saw that Silk had wisely

selected a room overlooking the fire escape.

The Bat slipped through an adjoining yard, climbed a fence without making a sound and mounted the fire escape. He tapped lightly on Silk's window and he was instantly admitted.

"Hugo's room is directly across the hall," Silk reported, extending an envelope. "This was under his door. He's not home yet."

THE Bat took the envelope which bore a special delivery stamp. He studied the handwriting on the outside. Then he drew a very sharp, thin blade from his pocket, inserted it beneath the flap and gently sliced the letter open.

Two one-thousand-dollar bills fluttered to the floor. That was all there was in the envelope.

"Blood money," the Bat whispered. "Hugo's pay for killing two men. Now I'm sure we're on the right track. Silk, there's pen and ink over on that table. Do you think you could copy this handwriting so Hugo wouldn't notice any discrepancies?"

Silk looked at the handwriting and laughed softly. "I put out some fancy kites in my day. Forged checks to you, sir. I can do it."

He sat down, worked swiftly until he had mastered his task and then took the Bat's dictation.

Hugo,

We pay you one-half of the promised money because we feel your work was simple and did not involve you in any danger. Perhaps we shall soon have another job for you and make up the amount deducted from this sum.

"How will I sign it?" Silk asked.

"We can't use a name. The spies probably wouldn't anyhow. To give the thing a ring of authenticity just sign it 'Seig Heil'."

Silk folded the letter. The Bat took

it, carefully wiped every portion of the paper with a handkerchief to remove fingerprints and with his own gloved hands he refolded it, inserted one of the thousand-dollar notes and resealed the flap expertly.

"A fair job," he told Silk. "I'm banking on the fact that little Hugo will be so mad when he reads it that he won't pay much attention to the envelope. I'm also hoping he'll see red and head for the men who hired him to commit murder. It's our only chance. Shove the letter back under his door."

Both men sat in silence for more than two hours before someone pounded up the stairs and stopped in front of Hugo's door. The Bat heard a slight grunt as Hugo bent down to pick up the envelope. Then the door closed.

Two minutes later it opened again and the same footsteps raced down the stairs. Silk was after the man in a flash, while the Bat slipped out the window, down the fire escape and ran back to where his car was parked. He turned around, rolled down the street in front of the boarding house and saw Silk nervously pacing the walk. The Bat stopped and Silk piled in.

"He got aboard a bus. Turn left and you can't miss it," he said.

The Bat picked up the trail quickly. Hugo seemed so enraged at the gyping he had received that he gave no thought to the possibility of pursuit. He got off the bus at the end of the line and hailed a taxi. Now the trail led far beyond the city limits and over a lane with deep ruts. They watched Hugo dismiss the cab and start walking briskly along.

"There is only one house at the end of this lane," the Bat said. "Take the car, Silk. Get Butch and bring him here as quickly as possible! Watch the place. If anything happens, tell Butch there's no limit to using his muscles and his fists. Keep your gun ready and don't stop to apologize before you start shooting."

CHAPTER VIII

Siege

NORTON slid behind the wheel, turned the coupé and headed back. The Bat merged into the darkness, picked a path across pasture land and made for the isolated house from the rear. He had vivid memories of watchdogs and he made certain none were kept on these premises before he crept up to the house and crouched beneath a window. He could hear loud voices and the banging of a fist against a table. The Bat risked a quick glance through the window.

Hugo was there, his face suffused by rage. He waved the thousand-dollar bill under the nose of a man the Bat already knew. He was the spectacled individual who had captured Silk and ordered his death.

"You stupid swine!" this man shouted to be heard above Hugo's impassioned tones. "This is a trick. We placed two bills in that envelope and no letter. You have been trailed here. You have failed us so miserably and there is only one penalty."

Hugo's reddened face suddenly grew pale. He dropped the thousand-dollar bill on the table and backed away. There were four other men in the room. Hugo wasn't watching them. His eyes riveted on the spectacled man, who gave a covert signal. One of the other spies quietly left the room for a moment and returned, holding a pillow against his chest. Hugo, his back against the wall, was pleading for another chance. No one else spoke.

Suddenly the man with the pillow sprang forward. He pushed the pillow against Hugo's chest. There was a dull explosion that couldn't be heard

far beyond the house. Hugo's wild pleas ended abruptly. A dazed look came into his eyes. Then he slowly slid down against the wall, one hand clawing at his chest just over the heart. Blood welled out between his fingers. Hugo died as he had lived—by violence.

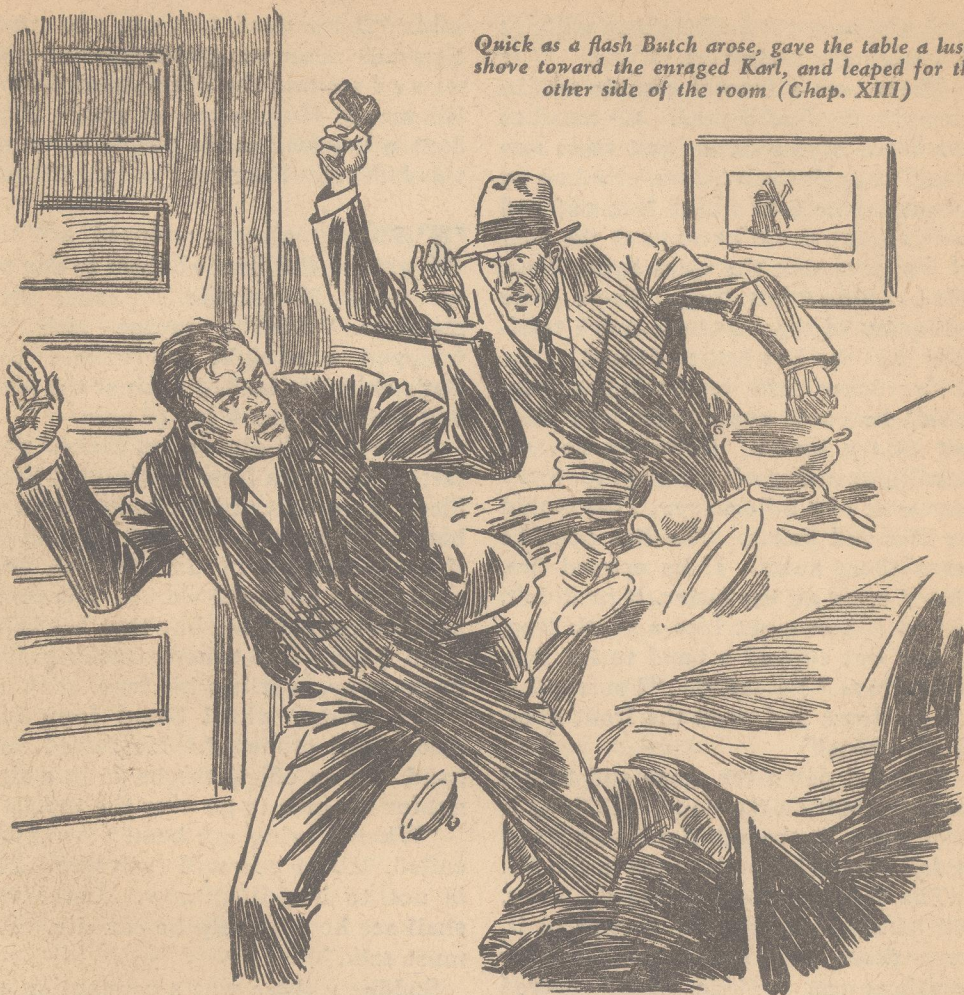
Then, suddenly, the back and front doors of the house opened and erupted men. The Bat estimated that there were about a dozen. All had been probably waiting for a signal from their leader. They spread out with military precision. The Bat felt his heart thump violently. He hadn't expected this. Flight perhaps, or a quick dousing of lights. These men adopted unexpected and dangerous tactics instead. They were surrounding their own hideout.

Gradually they closed in although four lurked near the lane watching it. The Bat was trapped. He saw now that all brush and trees had been removed from around the house so that it was impossible to find any shelter. So long as he remained in the shadows he had a fair chance, but these men were methodically coming closer and examining every foot of ground. They were bound to spot him—and soon. Here, in the open, he wouldn't stand a chance.

The Bat waited no longer. The window above his head was low. He could have climbed through it in a split-second if it had been open. Nevertheless he had to take a chance. He held his guns in both hands. He straightened up suddenly, struck a blow against the window pane and shattered it. He hoisted himself up, heedless of the sharp edges of glass that ripped his clothing. Guns began to bark. Bullets plowed into the sides of the house, dangerously close. Then he was inside.

HE saw one man bolt into the room, shooting as he came. The Bat's guns exploded with twin roars

Quick as a flash Butch arose, gave the table a lusty shove toward the enraged Karl, and leaped for the other side of the room (Chap. XIII)



and jets of flame. The man went down, his gun flying from his hand. The Bat stepped beside the window, saw four or five of the spies rushing toward the house and blazed away at them. The fusillade of lead sent them scurrying back where there was some semblance of cover. The Bat hastily doused the lights, ran into the hallway and heard the front door slam shut just as he entered. Through a small glass window set high in the door he saw a man running madly away. It was the spectacled leader of these spies.

The Bat locked the door and then raced upstairs. There was no time to make an examination of the house and he had well founded suspicion that he

was alone, anyway. He ran to a window, saw four of the men slinking close and winged two shots over their heads. Instantly a salvo of gunfire broke out and bullets chopped holes in the already shattered glass, thudded into the walls and forced the Bat to duck out of the way. He smiled wryly under his hood. The besieged had become the besiegers. He was one against many desperate men.

Then he groaned aloud. At any moment Silk and Butch might come barging into the fray. There was no way by which they'd know the Bat was inside the house until they were too close to realize their mistake. Those four men, waiting in case reinforce-

ments appeared, would shoot without the slightest hesitation.

There was a frontal assault on the door the Bat had locked. He raced to the front of the house and fired two shots through the window. He had no target for he didn't dare lean out and take aim at those below, but the roar of his guns sent the spies flying back. This couldn't last long. There were too many of them and too much territory that the Bat had to defend.

He rushed back to a window from which he could survey the lane leading to the house. Distantly he saw headlights swing off the main highway a quarter of a mile away. That would be Silk and Butch. The Bat couldn't warn them away. If he opened fire, they'd come all the faster. If he didn't, they'd run straight into a death trap.

The Bat cupped a hand to his lips. "Out there," he called. "I surrender. I'll go down and open the front door. Don't shoot!"

He sped down the steps and thrust back the bolt on the door. He flung it wide open, lit the hall lights and stood in full view with both hands in the air.

The spectacled spy called an order. All of his men came in answer to it, even those who had taken up their positions near the lane. Guns covered the Bat as the men filed into the hall. The spectacled spy stepped up to the Bat. His face was white with rage and his gun hand shook.

"So," he snarled, "it is the famous Black Bat who has been working against us. The Bat who has never before been captured. Take off that hood!"

The Bat moved back slightly until his spine was flat against the wall. "Oh, no," he said in a pleasant voice. "I'm not taking this hood off for anyone. If you want to see my face, just step forward and try to remove the hood."

"I will shoot you dead," the spy raged and his gun came up.

"You're a fool if you do," the Bat

said. "If I'm dead, how can you question me? How can you determine just where I secured the information which led me to Hugo—and to you? Perhaps a hundred other people know of this hideout. Perhaps I've told them."

THE spy glared, whipped off his glasses and handed them to one of his men. He strode forward, fists clenched. With a savage oath he whipped a straight jab toward the Bat's chin. It landed against the wall and the spy gave a cry of pain.

Then a black-gloved fist flicked out, rattled the spy's front teeth until they bled. Two other men closed in, clubbing their guns. The Bat hit one of them in the pit of the stomach and gave him a powerful shove. His companions caught him, but that act held them back. The other attacking spy drew away, snarling his rage.

The leader wiped blood from his mouth and crouched. He raised one hand, like an officer might do in a signal for his men to go over the top.

"When I bring my hand down," he called, "all of you will rush him. He is not to be killed now. Later we shall see how bravely he can die. He must talk."

Suddenly there was a commotion at the rear of the group. One man yelled an alarm.

"Fritz—he has gone! A moment ago he stood by my side, now he has disappeared."

The spy leader turned swiftly, and then the Bat went into action. He lunged forward, wrapped one powerful arm around the leader's middle and with the other hand wrested the gun from his grasp. He jabbed the muzzle of it against the spy's neck.

"Now we're on slightly more even terms," he announced. "Tell your men to lay off or I'll blow your neck into their faces."

All of the assembled spies turned back to watch the grim scene. The Bat gave no indication of surprise when

he saw a giant hand suddenly inserted through the door and huge fingers close around the throat of the nearest man. He saw the spy lifted completely off the floor and whisked out of the house. One moment later another vanished in similar fashion. It was done so silently and neatly that no one even missed the departed members of the spy ring.

The leader breathed hoarsely, but he made no attempt to wriggle out of the Bat's embrace. The pressure against the nape of his neck warned him that to do so would spell sudden death. They were stalemate for the moment. One man against more than a dozen, and he held all the cards. But it couldn't last. The spies realized that they had to get this hooded being even if their leader died for it.

He seemed to know that too for suddenly he gave a violent wrench that pulled himself free of the Bat's restraining embrace. The spies surged forward and then things really happened. A hulk of a man stepped into the hallway. It was Butch. Above his head he held a squirming, kicking man. He hurled this human projectile into the middle of the advancing spies.

With a roar that shook the house Butch charged forward, toppling men over with blows that broke bones when they landed. On his heels came Silk, gun clubbed. The narrow hallway hemmed in the men so closely that they had no chance to shoot. Every time one sought to dart into one of the

other rooms, Butch yanked him back and the spy no longer took any interest in the fight.

SOMEONE wriggled through the crowd and started up the stairs. It was the spectacled spy. He had no gun and presented no immediate hazard, but his flight broke any morale which his men might have had left. There were only seven standing on their feet. Butch menaced these while Silk kicked fallen weapons out of their reach.

The Bat used his fists, battled a path to the stairs and went up them three at a time. He reached the top, tried to figure out in what direction the spectacled spy had fled and then—there was a single shot and the sound of a body falling heavily.

The Bat found the door of the room locked. He drew back, hurled himself at the panels and smashed the door down. Inside he saw what he expected to find. The spectacled spy had taken his defeat in a manner all spies live to dread. He had found a gun somewhere in the room and sent a bullet smashing through his own temple.

Downstairs there was further commotion. The Bat glanced out of the window and saw some of the men running madly away. He sighed, joined Butch and Silk to give them soft-spoken compliments. There were still five men groaning on the floor. Butch gathered them up by twos and deposited them in chairs. The Bat faced the group.

[Turn Page]



"Your leader has killed himself," he announced. "He has left you to take all the blame for his deeds. It means that those of you who are not citizens will be sent back to wherever you came from. By looking at you, I'd say that is Germany. You'll return to face dishonor and very probably be sent to the front as punishment. Talk and I can promise you a term in prison that will more than likely last longer than that foolish war abroad. I'm asking only once."

"But we cannot tell what we do not know," one of the men quavered. "Ritter, whom you say killed himself, was the only man we knew who directed our movements."

"Then Ritter was not the real leader? There is another?"

The talkative spy nodded. "Yes. We do not know who this man is. We have never seen him nor heard him speak. His orders came through Ritter. You must believe me. I would not lie now—when you can have us sent back. Some of us did not ask to join this service. We were forced to. If we refused, our wives and children in Germany, would be taken to concentration camps and we should never again see them. You must believe me."

"We'll leave that for the F.B.I. men," the Bat said. "You'll be treated fairly even if you cannot tell us anything. Perhaps you know this—what has a watch to do with this? A watch that flies!"

The spy gaped in stupefaction. The Bat could see that this was a puzzle to him. He questioned them all further until he had no remaining doubts. These men were merely dupes, held in reserve for some kind of a diabolical plot. A search of each man revealed nothing of importance beyond papers on some that indicated all of them had families abroad, families who would obviously be imperiled unless these men obeyed the orders of their superiors.

"Tie them up, Butch," the Bat ordered. "Silk, help him. I'm going to look this nest over. It's been used as a hideout for a long time and there may be something informative here."

THE Bat began a systematic search of the floor above. He dumped the contents of desks and drawers on the floor, pulled up rugs, ran window shades down their full length to see if documents had been rolled up in them.

Butch and Silk joined him after the prisoners were securely tied up. Finally the Bat entered the last room down the hall. It was small and oblong. There was hardly any space between one wall and the doorway. The Bat rapped knuckles against the wall. It sounded hollow.

"As I thought," he said grimly. "This room is too small to be true. There is a hidden panel somewhere. We've got to find it."

Butch growled, set his shoulder against the wall and shoved. Apparently the wall was thinly constructed and simply papered over to give the illusion that no secret room was behind it. Boards cracked and broke until there was an aperture through which Silk was able to squirm. In a moment the hidden panel swung open. Inside, the Bat found a small workbench and on it what seemed to be some kind of a building, or series of buildings, done in miniature.

"Interesting," he said. "Butch, take it to the car and be very careful. This may be more important than it looks. There is a garage at the rear of this house. Undoubtedly you will find a car there. Help yourself. I'll take the coupé because I have a midnight visit to make. Go straight back to the house and be careful that none of these spies who fled are hanging around waiting to take pot shots at us."

"Them guys," Butch said, picking up the miniature building, using both hands to do so, "ain't in no shape

to do any shootin', Boss. I plastered their eyes shut for 'em."

The Bat slipped quietly downstairs, listened outside the room in which the prisoners were laid out like mummies wrapped in rope, and heard them talking in low voices. Every word only served to indicate they had told the Bat the truth before. He passed through the kitchen, saw Hugo's body grotesquely propped against the wall and picked up the thousand-dollar bill which had fallen from his frantic fingers. Then he made his way to where Butch had left the coupé parked.

CHAPTER IX

The Miniature



IT WAS twenty-five minutes later that the Bat appeared in the doorway of a modest living room. Lieutenant McGrath was slumped in a chair reading a newspaper and puffing complacently on his well heeled pipe.

"Good evening, Lieutenant," the Bat said pleasantly.

McGrath's feet came down with a bang. He jumped up and then he flung the newspaper on the floor.

"Okay," he growled. "You're here, so what do you want?"

The Bat spread his hands wide. "I come in peace, Lieutenant. You see, there are no guns in my hands. I have something for you."

He placed two one-thousand-dollar bills on the table in front of McGrath's popping eyes. "That is blood money. Murder money! It was paid for the murders of Sloane and Collier. The man who killed them has already paid the supreme penalty. No, I did not execute him. One of his own colleagues did that. Therefore, I turn this money

over to you for the pension fund.

"And while you still have that startled look on your face, I'll tell you more. If you'll take a squad and go to the last house on Belmont Lane, you'll find five men trussed up and alive. In the kitchen you'll find the body of the murderer I just told you about. Upstairs is another corpse—that of the man who led this particular group of spies. Please note that neither of these bodies bears a black bat brand."

The Bat moved toward the door, but McGrath held up his hand. "Wait a minute," he said. "You don't mean you've busted this case wide open?"

"I haven't even made a dent in it, much to my disgust," the Bat said. "However, I am progressing. But I'm afraid this spy ring is progressing even faster."

McGrath folded the two thousand-dollar bills and stowed them in his vest pocket. "Would you mind if I shook your hand?" he asked.

A chuckle came from behind the Bat's hood. "Of course not, Lieutenant. That is, if you wouldn't mind shaking my hand while I keep a gun buried in your middle. My, my—you are putting on weight. Must be that you're not active enough. Can it be that you've given up trying to catch me?"

McGrath grimaced. "All right, so you won't let me get my hands on you, but one of these days—"

"I'll get you, Mr. Black Bat," the Bat finished for him. "Good night, Lieutenant. Don't accidentally light your pipe with one of those thousand-dollar bills. And you needn't charge out of the house to track me down. I won't be there."

"You'll vanish, I suppose," McGrath grumbled, "down your badger hole as usual."

"I'll merely spread my wings and take flight," the Bat assured him.

The lights went out. When McGrath finally located the switch the Bat was gone. McGrath returned

to his chair, stroking his chin thoughtfully. Then he phoned headquarters and had a squad sent out to arrest the spies.

The Bat found Silk and Butch waiting in the laboratory. Both of them were gingerly examining the miniature building which now rested on the lab bench. The Bat stripped off his regalia, stowed it away and donned the clothing habitual to Tony Quinn. He pulled up a high stool, sat down and studied the miniature himself.

"It's a factory of some kind," he said. "And unless my sense of detail is badly distorted, this replica is a scale model. There is nothing crude about it. In fact, I'd say an expert created this piece of work. But what does it mean? Why was it hidden in that spy nest? Why was it created in the first place?"

"I dunno," Butch offered seriously, and Tony Quinn laughed.

"Get back to your room, Butch, and be ready for plenty of trouble. Better wash your hands before you leave. An eagle-eyed cop might notice those raw knuckles and wonder whom you murdered. Silk, how about some food? Butch, you're invited to remain if you wish."

Butch dried his hands. "I had me a little snack already," he said. "A coupla steaks and a platter of French fries. I'll eat a real meal in a couple of hours, but I ain't hungry now. Say—my mitts ain't sore at all. If you want somebody else's head bashed in, just let me know."

TONY QUINN, cane between his knees and that uncanny blind look over his eyes, finished his second cup of coffee half an hour later. Silk sat across the table from him.

"That miniature building fascinates me," Quinn admitted. "If I only knew what building it represents. Those spies wouldn't spend their time and money to create such a perfect miniature just to make a toy Swiss

village. Look, Silk, there's a camera somewhere in the attic that I used before I became blind. Get it and see what you can do with it. Photograph this miniature from every angle, including the base of it. If everything else fails we may have to check aerial views of all factories of this type."

"Right away, sir," Silk answered. "But what's our next move? We cleaned out that nest thoroughly, but we got nothing in return. Fisk is still missing. So is Lockhart—if that isn't his corpse at the morgue."

"And Hugh Brooks has plenty to explain," the Bat mused. "He heard me phone Durrance that I was coming to see him. If Durrance didn't set that murder trap for me, Brooks might have known something about it. It seems to me he followed over to Durrance's in rather a hurry—not even stopping to put on his clothes. Perhaps he thought he'd find me dead. No, Silk, we haven't even tapped the surface of this case, but something tells me we shall do so soon."

While Silk found and dusted off the camera, Tony Quinn studied the miniature factory building intently. It was complete to smallest detail. There were even tiny railroad tracks which led well into the factory yards. There were tall, towerlike walls with what seemed to be a crane track above them. These were arranged in batteries. A giant retort or distilling apparatus occupied a large part of the miniature and around this was another battery of those towerlike walls.

On impulse Quinn turned the miniature upside down, working very carefully lest some part of the object be disturbed. There was nothing on the bottom. Then, as he turned it back, several of the tiny bricks dropped out of their places and fell on the bench. He noticed that they hadn't been glued in, but simply slid into tiny sockets which they fitted with meticulous precision. When Silk began taking his pictures, Quinn had him

snap one showing these small bricks removed from their places in the various walls.

While Silk completed this work, Quinn began donning the regalia of the Bat again. He answered Silk's inquiring look.

"We can't waste a moment, Silk. So far we've got nowhere, while the spies have been going their own way, completing whatever diabolical scheme they have afoot. Since the repeal of our embargo laws, Nazi spies have particularly been active. If it begins to look as though Germany may lose the war because we sell her enemies so much war material, a desperate high command in Berlin may order a complete sabotage of all munitions factories in this country."

"That's right," Silk admitted. "And I think this miniature replica is that of some big factory. I wish we could identify it. I'll be finished in a few moments, sir. If I could be of help—"

Quinn thrust his guns into their holsters and drew on his black silk gloves. "Not right now, Silk. Of all our suspects the only available man happens to be Hugh Brooks. He may not be our man but if he isn't someone has him under observation. We need clues to lead us to Fisk and Durrance—something to tell us why Lockhart should have substituted another man to plunge to death for him. I must learn more about that mysterious 'watch that flies'. Somebody phoned from Brooks' house to set that bomb trap at Durrance's for me, and I'm going to trick Brooks—or someone associated with him—into making another phone call."

The Bat slipped down into the tunnel, emerged through the garden house and made sure he was unobserved. Then he reached the coupé pulled down the black, wide-brimmed hat he always wore on these expeditions, so that no inquisitive patrolman might spot the hood of the Bat and go into action.

HE discovered that somebody had boarded up the window which he had broken only a few hours before. He noticed, too, that Brooks' place was now well guarded by Joe Allen's force of private detectives. There were four of them, constantly patrolling the estate. Only the Bat could have slipped through their lines so easily to make his stealthy way to the cellar hatch. Inside the cellarway, he examined the door.

Although inky blackness would have prevented any other man from operating in this narrow space, the Bat's eyes saw everything plainly. Like most cellar doors this one was cheaply constructed and offered no great barrier. He picked the lock in two minutes, stepped into the cellar itself and gently closed the door behind him.

As he climbed the stairs to the first floor, he heard voices engaged in earnest conversation. The Bat made his way into the hall, slipped behind a tall Cape Cod chair and listened. Brooks was talking to someone.

"—this moment on I want no less than four men guarding me at all times. I'm the only one left who saw those two agents die. The killer may strike without warning this time. I'd be dead now if the Black Bat hadn't appeared. Allen, you and your men *mustn't* fail me now!"

Joe Allen put all the assurance possible into his voice. "My boys have orders to challenge anyone trying to get in. If they receive no reply, they have instructions to shoot. And don't think I'm laying down on the job, Mr. Brooks. I'm going to look for Fisk and Durrance immediately."

The Bat mentally praised the quality of the crepe heels and soles of his shoes for they made no sound at all as he maneuvered across the hall toward a small desk on which rested a telephone. He had a well-planned scheme to make someone use this phone and give away Durrance's hiding place. It

was a dial type and the Bat went to work on it with sure, deft hands. He had brought along a small kid of extremely well made tools.

It took him only a few moments to remove the dial and expose the mechanism beneath it. He ripped a sheet from a note pad, cut around piece out of the white paper and fitted this inside the instrument just beneath the dial. Next he broke the point off a lead pencil on the desk, fastened this into place within the phone itself. This done, he carefully reassembled the instrument, put what was left of the slip of note paper into his pocket and stepped back.

He drew a gun, edged toward the room where Detective Joe Allen was still talking to Brooks, and peered into it. Brooks was still clad in pajamas and a lounging robe. Joe Allen, sprawled out in a big chair, looked like a scarecrow.

"You have absolutely nothing to worry about," Allen was saying confidently. "You're as safe here as if you were in a cell at Sing Sing. Only those persons whom you ask to call will be admitted. No one else will even reach the front door. Take my word for that."

"Sorry, Mr. Allen," said the Bat dryly from the doorway. "I got through without much trouble."

Joe Allen fairly bolted out of the chair, one hand streaking toward his coat pocket. Brooks grabbed his arm.

"Take it easy, Allen. That's the Black Bat. He's a friend."

A LLEN relaxed and allowed a wry grin to steal over his face. "I hope so," he said slowly. "Wouldn't do us much good if he was after your hide, Mr. Brooks. This is the first time in my life anybody ever got the drop on me."

The Bat laughed. "Please sit down again, gentlemen. If I have your word that you will not attempt to attack me, I'll put my gun away."

Joe Allen waved a hand magnanimously. "I'm a private dick, Bat. I haven't any desire to tackle you. Mr. Brooks has been telling me that you saved his life. If I can help you in any way, just sing out."

"I don't think you can," the Bat said and sat down facing them. "However, Mr. Brooks, you may be of some help. You are the only man left who saw Sloane and Collier die. Fisk left the room before Lockhart went to phone. Could Fisk have attacked Lockhart and thrown him out of the window?"

Brooks rubbed his chin. "Yes, that would have been possible. Allen was in the meeting room by then and his guards were still outside in the corridor. Fisk may have been alone with Lockhart before running out, and I can add this fact—Fisk knew at least a part of what Collier and Sloane were going to report. Lockhart said so. Like you, Bat, I have believed all along that Fisk is the guilty man. Who else could it be?"

"Durrance," Joe Allen suggested. "He vanished like Fisk did, getting one of my operatives killed in the process. Durrance was a clever guy. Maybe the two of 'em are in cahoots. Our next step should be locating those two men because I'm sure that what they know will solve this whole crazy case."

"I have an idea where Durrance might be," the Bat said calmly. "Earlier tonight I uncovered one of the branches of this spy organization. I captured several men and, while they didn't know much, I persuaded them to tell me all they could. One of them gave me a lead as to where Durrance might be found. I'm going there immediately."

The Bat arose. "There is no need to warn your men not to shoot me, Allen," he said. "They won't even see me. If I learn anything or find Durrance, you'll know about it—both of you. Perhaps with our next meeting we shall know enough to smash this

spy ring and its leaders completely."

The Bat moved toward one of the big windows at the far end of the room. He raised it very quietly and took a quick look outside. Then he touched his hooded forehead in an easy salute, pulled the drapes around himself and the window, and he was gone.

Brooks rushed over to the window and peered out. "I hope he's right, Allen. If one of your men plugs him, we'll lose the most valuable ally we've had so far."

"They didn't plug him coming in," Allen grunted, and jammed on his hat. "I'm betting fifty to one they don't now. Maybe the Bat will get Dur-rance. I hope so, but just to make sure I'm going to look for him myself. I'll report in the morning as usual, Mr. Brooks. Watch yourself meanwhile."

Joe Allen walked to the front door, opened it and called out a softly spoken order. His men responded and he passed safely through their lines. Brooks glanced at his wrist watch, sighed and yawned. He extinguished the lights and walked out into the hall.

CHAPTER X

Visitor in the Night



JUST as he disappeared from the room, the heavy velvet drapes masking the window moved slightly and the Bat emerged from behind them. His pretense of making his escape had worked beautifully. When Brooks had tried to spot him leaving the estate, the Bat had been standing not ten inches away from him. Someone was in the front hall. The Bat heard the click of the telephone being lifted from its cradle and then the sound of rapid dialing reached his ears. Whoever used the phone, spoke in a whispered voice that

escaped even the Bat's sensitive ears, and then hung up.

Five minutes went by and the house settled down to an eerie quiet. The Bat crept into the hallway, used his screw driver again and removed from under the phone dial that round piece of paper. There were lines on it now, drawn by that tiny fragment of graphite. The Bat carefully set this paper directly over the phone dial.

His keen eyesight compared the marks on the paper with the location of the dial numbers until he was able to read what number had been called. He made a mental note of it, slipped back down the cellar and made his way through Joe Allen's four-man guard around the house. The men were attentive and suspicious, but not one of them saw so much as the Bat's shadow.

He drove to a police signal box, put on his floppy-brimmed hat and stepped out of the car. He could see the patrolman just turning the corner several blocks away and going in the other direction.

"He's just put in his duty call," the Bat told himself. "Which means he won't be back in a hurry. Now if the other patrolmen who use this box don't show up, I'll have something."

Opening the police signal box was accomplished easily, for the Bat carried a key that would fit any of them. He picked up the phone inside and was automatically connected with the switchboard operator at the precinct.

The Bat made his voice gruff. "I got a lost kid here, Sarge. Yeah—he don't know his name or address, but here's a hot one. He knows his phone number. It's Garland eight-nine-two-six-seven. Suppose you check on the reverse directory for the address of that number, and I'll send the kid home in a cab. What? No, if you phone his folks, they'll be worried. The kid was visiting somebody and his folks don't expect him back. That's how he got lost, see? He didn't like the place and was trying to get home again."

The Bat kept watching the deserted street, glad that it was nearly dawn and no one was abroad. The switchboard operator came back with the news he wanted in three minutes.

"Say, Murph, that kid sure is a long way from home. That phone is in a house at twenty-seven-ninety-four Esterbrook Road. Name of Theimer. That right?"

The Bat turned his head and spoke to the imaginary lost boy. "Your name Theimer? It is, huh? Okay, kid." Then he spoke into the phone again. "Yeah that's it. So what if it costs me half a day's pay to get the kid home. I'll pin a note on him. Maybe his old man will look me up tomorrow night. Thanks, Sarge."

The Bat chuckled softly, got back into his coupé and sent it humming north. He had little time to spare for if Brooks had made that call to warn someone that the Bat was on his way, the spies would clear out quickly or have time enough to prepare an elaborate trap from which the Bat might not escape. He stopped, slipped off his hood, donned the wide-brimmed hat and a dark topcoat which he pulled up well around his throat.

HE scurried into a bus terminal, phoned Silk and was out again before anyone had a good look at him. The Bat rarely took such chances for the scars on his face would give him away to any alert policeman. It didn't help matters at all that almost every cop knew Tony Quinn, for he had been very closely associated with them during his days as a district attorney.

Silk and Butch met him at an appointed spot only half a mile from the address which the Bat had so adroitly wormed out of the switchboard sergeant at the precinct station.

"We may be too late," he told Silk and Butch as they parked and were preparing to head toward the spy rendezvous, "but if they left in a hurry, maybe they forgot a clue. At any rate

I have an idea you two will come in handy."

Then the Bat saw headlights flash from a garage behind the house they stalked. He darted toward the sedan which Silk and Butch had used.

"Both of you stay here," he ordered. "I'll follow that car. When we're out of sight, sneak into the place and see what's going on. Be careful—all of them may not be in the car."

The headlights didn't turn in their direction fortunately, and he sent the heavy sedan racing after them. He used no headlights, for the Bat could see the road just as plainly without them.

He remained far enough behind so that those in the speeding car would neither hear his motor nor catch a glimpse of the sedan. The chase led to a state highway which stretched out like a huge gray ribbon in the night. The Bat's speedometer logged four miles before the spy car began to slow up. Finally it stopped altogether, and the Bat braked his own sedan.

Then he saw one man being forcibly shoved out. The distance was too great to identify this man, but the Bat had an idea that the spies were resorting to the old gangster trick of getting rid of an unwanted passenger. This hunch became even stronger when the lone individual began running like mad away from the spy car.

The Bat stepped on the gas pedal hard. He saw a jet of orange flame lance out from the rear door of the car. The running man ran all the faster. Again the weapon barked and missed. The Bat was drawing closer and closer. In a moment those spies would see him bearing down on them. Without question guns would then be turned on the Bat, but he kept on going. The running man saw him approach and waved both hands while he yelled in terror.

"Head for the brush and drop!" The Bat yelled as he raced by. Then he forgot about the intended victim. The men inside the car were concentrating their

efforts on him now. The section of windshield to his right cobwebbed, and he gave silent thanks that it was shatter-proof. Bullets spanged against the fenders and the radiator, but still that sedan hurtled forward, aimed straight at the spy car. Suddenly all four doors of the spy car opened and erupted five men. They streaked away for safety. Let this fool of a driver crash if he wanted to. It would make things all the easier.

But when it seemed impossible to avoid a devastating crash, the Bat turned the wheel steadily and without jerking. The muscles in his arms bulged under the strain, but he whisked by the spy car with several inches to spare. Tires screeched and the sedan swayed drunkenly, but the Bat made it without overturning. He tramped on the brake until he felt certain that it was safe to attempt a wide swing. The car took that turn on two wheels, straightened up and roared back.

As he approached the spy car, he saw that all five men were searching for their intended victim. A moment later the fugitive appeared as fright got the better of calm judgment. He broke from the brush and began running madly away. Guns spouted at him and the spies took up the chase.

Then they heard the howl of the Bat's motor, glanced over their shoulders and spread in all directions. Guns flared as the sedan hurtled by, but no slugs found

a mark. The running man slowed up when he recognized the oncoming car. The Bat opened the right-hand front door, slowed down, and the murder victim leaped aboard.

"Thank you," he panted, half-sobbing. "Thank you very much. I thought I was—"

He stopped short when he saw the eerie black hood over the Bat's head. He gasped and reached for the door.

"Relax," the Bat said curtly. "Do you think I'd have bothered to save you if I planned on harming you? I'm the Black Bat. Who are you?"

"D—Durrance," the man licked his lips. "I—I'm sorry I'm so damned nervous, but I—I've been through so much."

"I know, but you're quite safe now. Tell me what happened at your home after I called. Were you kidnaped?"

"The Black Bat? Of course! Anyway, about five or ten minutes after you phoned, someone knocked on the door with that same signal you told me to expect. I opened the door and two men seized me. They wound some kind of a cloth around my head and dragged me to a car. I think they chloroformed me. When I woke up, I was in some kind of a house. I can show you where it is."

"I already know," the Bat said. "That's where I picked up your trail. Why did they snatch you? What did they want?"

"A watch!" Durrance said in per-

[Turn Page]

CLOTHESPIN NOSE

Sensational extra help for colds—with Luden's! These famous cough drops not only help soothe throat, but release a menthol vapor—which, with



every breath, helps penetrate clogged nasal passages, helps relieve "clothespin nose!"

Copy. 1940, Ludens, Inc.



plexity. "They wanted to know what happened to a watch that Collier and Sloane had brought to the meeting room. I didn't know what they were talking about, but they wouldn't believe me. I didn't see any watch."

"Who questioned you?" the Bat wanted to know as he turned off the highway and headed back toward the spy nest.

"I don't know. They had me in a dark room. I couldn't see the man who questioned me. But when I didn't answer, two of the men kept slapping my face until I almost went mad. And finally they took me out to kill me. It's all very well to be patriotic, as Lockhart used to say, but when they torture me, try to kill me, that's more than I can stand. I'm going away."

A flashlight winked and Silk stepped out into the road. The Bat stopped, stepped out of the car and led Silk a few feet away.

"Butch is still in the house," Silk reported. "We couldn't find a thing."

"Don't get close enough to the car so that Durrance can identify you," the Bat warned. "But watch him. The road, too. Those spies may be back."

The Bat hurried to the house. Butch let him in. Without turning on any lights the Bat started a careful search of the place. He located the room where Durrance had been questioned and tortured. It was a small, windowless room and the ropes that had bound Durrance were still on the floor. There was a small table with a chair beside it on one corner. The Bat's eyes flicked across the table top and he grunted in surprise and pleasure. The surface of that table was covered with glass.

"REMOVE the glass top," the Bat told Butch. "Be careful that you don't smear any finger prints that may be on it. Wrap it completely in a piece of cloth."

Butch fell to work while the Bat kept on searching the rest of the place. He gave up after several minutes. These

spies were more than ordinarily careful. Nothing was left behind that would incriminate them or shed the slightest light on the identity of their leader. In the east the sky was turning gray. The Bat hurried back to the car, signaled that Silk and Butch were to take the coupé while he got into the sedan where Durrance was still sitting, wide-eyed with terror. The Bat headed toward the city.

"You don't know it," he told Durrance, "but your house has been gutted by explosion and fire. The only place where you can go is to a hotel. Supposing you register at the Hotel Schyler under the name of John Lind. I can reach you there if necessary and you'll be quite safe so long as you keep to your room."

"I'll do anything you say," Durrance agreed. "You saved my life and I know you must be trying to help me."

The Bat dropped Durrance off at a convenient spot, put on his wide-brimmed hat and drove through the early dawn back toward his own house. Butch was waiting just inside the gate and he drove the sedan away. The Bat didn't use the tunnel this time. Silk was waiting at the back door of the house. They went inside. Silk picked up the glass top which Butch had taken from the table at the spy nest.

"It's a forlorn hope," the Bat said, "but we can't pass up any chances. I'll have a look for prints at once. Let's go into the lab, Silk."

Silk began drawing the window shades in the library. "Did you notice, sir," he asked, "that something strange happened in the neighborhood while we were away? The gasoline station two blocks from here was blown up. That little hardware store where I buy bullets for target practice had smashed windows and looks as though it has been gutted by fire."

The Bat opened the secret door to the lab. "That's odd, Silk. Almost too odd to be coincidental, but we've got plenty—"

The Bat stopped abruptly and jerked erect. He almost dropped the section of plate-glass that he held. Silk peered over the Bat's shoulder.

Both men started speechlessly at the bench where the miniature factory had been resting. The miniature had been torn into a thousand pieces and hurled in all directions. A delicate instrument had fallen to the floor. A yellow-colored chemical dripped from a tipped-over reagent bottle. The laboratory which the Bat believed so well hidden and so perfectly protected, was almost in ruins.

The Bat whirled around. "Someone was in here," he ground out. "Someone has guessed that Tony Quinn and the Black Bat are one and the same. Search the house and keep your gun handy! Every closet, every corner, Silk. Don't miss a spot. We must find the man who came here and destroyed that miniature."

CHAPTER XI

Dangerous Assignment



BUT an hour's search inside and outside the house revealed nothing. An examination of doors and windows showed not the slightest trace of a forced entry. The garden house and the tunnel leading into the laboratory gave no clue to an invader.

When he was certain that no one lurked in or near the house the Bat peeled off his regalia and became Tony Quinn once more. He automatically picked up his cane and allowed that mask of blindness to steal over his eyes. He sat down heavily. Silk kept mopping his forehead and his usually immaculate shirt collar was wilted.

"It had to happen," Quinn said slowly. "It was bound to, Silk. I knew from the start that we couldn't get

away with our act forever, but—well, I thought somebody like Commissioner Warner or even Lieutenant McGrath would be the first to identify us in our true light. Instead of that, it's some crawling spy with his hands dripping menace for the whole world. Now he's got us cornered, but we'll fight, Silk. From this moment on we've got to work fast."

Quinn thrust his cane under one arm and no longer pretended that he was blind. He strode into the laboratory, carefully swept the debris aside and went to work. He dusted both surfaces of the plate-glass, brought out several remarkable clear finger prints and hastily catalogued them. He compared notes and then leaned back with a long sigh. Silk heard it and looked inquisitively at Quinn as he emerged from the laboratory and closed the door.

"A man, concealed by darkness, questioned Durrance," Quinn explained. "He sat before a small table and he left a few souvenirs—his finger prints, Silk. They are identical with those we found on Lockhart's personal effects."

"So it's Lockhart!" Silk groaned. "What can we do, sir? How did he ever suspect you?"

"I don't know that," Quinn replied, "but I have an answer to your first question. So far, almost every inning belongs to the spies, but from this moment on, we'll take the offensive. We must work faster than ever before and our feet mustn't slip a fraction of an inch. Those pictures you took of that miniature factory, Silk. Where are they?"

"Upstairs in one of the spare rooms," Silk said. "I hung the prints up there to dry. I'll bring them down at once, sir."

Silk sped away. Quinn kept pounding his right fist into the palm of his left hand. For the first time in months he was displaying nervousness. Exposure meant the end of the Black Bat! Meant an end of Tony Quinn, too, if

those spies chose to attack in force.

Quinn even considered a consultation with Police Commissioner Warner, a frank confession and a plea for help. Then his jaws snapped together. The Black Bat worked alone. He asked no help, wanted none except from that small group whom he knew could be trusted. Something banged against the front door and brought Quinn to his feet with a start.

He muttered a savage curse. That was the morning newspaper. Even a newsboy was giving him the jitters. Not since the weeks that he had tapped his way around, totally blind and without hope of ever recovering his sight, had Tony Quinn been so much on edge. He walked to the front door, peered out through a small window and then opened the door far enough to reach out and snag the newspaper.

SILK came hurrying downstairs as his master unfolded the paper. Quinn's eyes opened very wide. He walked into the library, sat down heavily and stared into the empty fireplace. Silk saw the headlines over Quinn's shoulder.

TWENTY-EIGHT MYSTERIOUS EXPLOSIONS AND FIRES ROCK CITY

Last night, between the hours of two and four, fire and police officials were kept on the run by twenty-eight explosions and fires that occurred with startling rapidity. They were entirely confined to gasoline tanks and hardware stores. Police are checking labor difficulties, but already state that there is no solution in that direction. Most of the hardware stores were privately owned and operated solely by the men who held title to them.

There was more, columns of it. Quinn looked up at Silk.

"That," he said, "was no coincidence. All this has something to do with the spy ring. Look at the addresses, Silk. These explosions happened in concentrated parts of the city. Commissioner Warner lives in one, Lieutenant McGrath in another. That F.B.I. agent,

Mike Igoe—four gas stations blew up in the vicinity of his home. More near Police Headquarters and the field headquarters building of the F.B.I."

"But what does it mean?" Silk asked. "What caused those explosions? I always thought that when spies went to work they tackled big things like the Raritan Arsenal or some of those big factories where they make ammunition and—"

"Those pictures," Quinn cried eagerly. "Quick, Silk! You've put me onto something."

Silk spread out the photographs he had taken of the miniature factory. Quinn used a magnifying glass to bring out each particular detail. He began making notes.

"It's some kind of a coal tar producing factory," he said finally. "There are batteries of coke furnances, giant distillation apparatus, big chimneys—everything that such a plant produces. There was a reason why that miniature was made to scale—and why it was destroyed. Silk we've got to find the original of that miniature. Somewhere there is a real factory in danger. Perhaps here is the motive that lies behind the spy ring. We must identify that plant. But how?"

"We might try to find books on the subject and see if there are any pictures in them," Silk said.

"That would take too long. I've got it! First I want you to print, in a precise hand, the words PROPERTY OF WAR DEPARTMENT on the back of each picture. Then slip out through the tunnel and bring Carol back. We can't risk phoning her from here—not after what's happened. Hurry!"

Carol came very promptly. Quinn spoke to her in a strained voice. "I hate to send you on an expedition of this kind, but Butch couldn't handle it deftly and Silk is out of the question. He might be recognized. I want you to take these pictures to the commanding officer at the arsenal across the river. Tell him you found them, noticed they

were marked as government property, and you came to return them.

"Pretend you know they are pictures of the arsenal itself and would probably be valuable property in the hands of spies. Then watch and listen. The moment you learn what factory this really is we'll have something to go on."

Carol tucked the envelope of pictures under one arm. She took a cab as far as the river, crossed via a ferry and boarded a trolley to reach the arsenal. She explained patiently to the sentry what she wanted. It took a few moments, but she was soon ushered into the offices of a colonel of the Chemical Warfare Service.

CAROL laid the pictures on the desk and quietly explained where she had found them.

"I think they are pictures of this very arsenal," she said excitedly. "See—everything looks the same."

The army officer glanced at her sharply. Then he smiled. "I really don't know how these came to be marked as the property of the War Department, young lady. They are not pictures of this arsenal, but of a coal tar manufacturing plant. Odd though—no one should be allowed to take such pictures in these times."

He picked up the phone. "Get me the superintendent of the Acme Dye Plant in Burgoyne."

Carol backed toward the door. "I'll go now if you don't mind, sir. I hope I didn't make trouble for anyone by returning the pictures."

"Not at all, young lady," the colonel assured her. "Leave your name and address with the corporal outside—just in case we need you again. And thanks, very much."

As Carol closed the door of the colonel's office, she didn't notice a piercing-eyed man watching her intently. She didn't see this man draw a small camera from a pocket and quickly take a couple of shots of her.

"She brings pictures and perhaps maps," this man told himself. "Therefore she must be a counter-espionage agent. It is well that I have her picture."

Carol passed by the corporal who was seated at a desk in the outer office, hurriedly left the premises and took a trolley back to town. There she used the ferry again and then a cab. An hour after leaving the arsenal, she was reporting to Tony Quinn.

"The colonel recognized it as the Acme Dye Works in Burgoyne, Tony. He was phoning them when I left—going to find out how come they permitted such pictures to be made. He said they were not government property and he told me to leave my name and address with the corporal in the other office. Of course I didn't."

Quinn chuckled. "A girl like you wouldn't be supposed to know that, darling. Now I'm afraid there is more work for you. Burgoyne isn't far from the city. Go there and get a job. Any kind of a job. I'll send Butch along just to be sure you're safe. Keep your ears and eyes open. This is a dangerous assignment, but they may not suspect a girl. We'll keep in touch with you. If things get too hot, leave immediately. If anything ever happened to you, Carol, I'd never forgive myself."

Carol perched on the arm of Quinn's chair and smiled down at him. "This time, Tony, it's a question of many, many lives. If what you think is true and American factories are filling up with saboteurs, I won't let you down because I'd be letting down a lot of other people, too. And I won't risk my foolish neck. I promise you that. Soon as I'm settled, I'll send you word. I ought to be there by early evening."

"Good," Quinn said. "I'll tell you what I wish to know after you're working there and able to get around the plant."

He led her to the hidden laboratory door and Silk discreetly departed until he heard the door shut. Quinn looked

more genuinely worried than Silk had ever seen him.

"It's not enough that someone may know Tony Quinn is the Bat," he growled. "Now I'm forced to send Carol into danger, too. Contact Butch and tell him to go to this Acme Dye Works to keep an eye on Carol. They're hiring men and women in those factories as fast as they can get them. Neither Carol nor Butch should have any trouble landing something."

CHAPTER XII

Yellow Fog



PRECISELY at seven the next morning Carol put on a modest dress, an old hat and a pair of none too prosperous looking shoes. It took her exactly five minutes to land a job.

At eight o'clock she was being shown how to fill hand grenades. The Acme Dye Works, it seemed, made their dyes in another part of the country and devoted all available space here to the manufacture of high explosives on order to foreign governments. This was a war industry in full swing. Located in a somewhat small town, every person who could pass a physical test got a job.

At ten-thirty Carol noticed a hollow-cheeked man dressed in dirty overalls regarding her intently. He even went so far as to put on a pair of glasses to study her features all the more intently. Carol turned her back on him, but not deliberately. Things might break from any angle and she wanted all avenues wide open.

But Carol would not have felt so confident had she known that concealed in the palm of his hand was a small photograph of herself. Hollow-cheek walked out of the building, headed for a gateman's booth and stepped in.

The gateman, a lynx-eyed, scowling man, growled, "Ja, ja," at his visitor's hoarsely whispered command and stepped out.

Hollow-cheek was alone in the gatehouse. He drew a screw driver from his pocket and disconnected the telephone wires. He opened a closet apparently used for rags and waste. He pulled some of this out uncovered another phone connection and quickly attached the factory instrument. He raised the receiver and waited until there was a click and an accented voice demanded to know his business.

"This is Karl," he said. "In the morning's mail I received the usual batch of pictures of persons we should watch for. There was a girl—number two-seven-eight—whom Heinrich saw in the offices of the Raritan Arsenal yesterday. She must be a counter-espionage agent. I await orders."

The man at the other end of the phone gave these orders without hesitation. "Watch her closely. See that the others are notified of her presence. When you see an opportunity—strike! But don't kill her until she reveals who sent her. Karl, there are further orders. We must have more of that mixture fifty-four—much more of it very soon. You had best use the plan you outlined to me a week ago. That is all for now."

Karl hastily hung up, disconnected the instrument and transferred it back to its regular line. He summoned the gateman and left. He crossed the huge yard, glancing at the sky scraping coke towers where coal was roasted so that its derivatives could be gathered and turned into gas, dyes and the mightiest explosives in the world.

"The stupid pigs," Karl muttered to himself. "In time of war this plant would be more valuable than a dozen army corps, and yet I could destroy it any moment I wished."

He grinned crookedly, made his way into the grenade room—and was almost bowled over by a giant of a man.

Karl hissed a curse, but the big man only grinned like a simpleton and passed on.

Karl didn't see the giant's mighty fists curl into knots. Butch often took savage dislikes on sight and this was one of the times. He had observed this man watching Carol so intently. Butch was a slow-thinking individual highly given to following hunches. He had one now—that this factory was a potential powder keg of trouble. Butch's orders were definite and simple. To watch Carol and act if she got into any kind of trouble.

THEY met at the lunch hour, but Carol signaled Butch to merely trail her. Butch followed her to a deserted shack far out of the factory yard.

"There is a man with a face like a stiff," Butch said, approaching. "He was watching you all morning. I think he must know you."

Carol smiled at him. "Thanks, Butch. I'll watch for him. But how could anyone know me? I've never even been in this vicinity before. However, I don't like the way things are going here. Too many nosey people. Have you noticed that small room just off the corridor where the time clocks are located? I found out that they carelessly keep a new kind of explosive known as Mixture fifty-four in there.

"Some people can't seem to realize, Butch, that this factory is aiding only one side of that European War. The other side can't like this situation and if they could put a stop to it, they most certainly would. Yet new employees aren't even questioned as to their background. If they possess two good hands and sense enough not to light a match, they're given jobs here. I'm betting this plant is overrun with foreign agents."

"Lots of Heinies," Butch said. "I been hearin' 'em talk. I guess you're right, too. The guy in the employment office took only one look at me and I had the job. He even told a couple of

other guys that they wouldn't have to buy a new derrick now. Funny, ain't he! Well—there goes the whistle. We'd better get back."

Carol went first. Butch trailed far behind her. As Carol stepped into the long corridor where the time clocks were set up, she noticed the hawk-faced man who had been watching her, duck away from one of the clocks and walk briskly toward the door. She shrugged and then hurried on when she realized that there was a line in back of her.

Outside, in the huge factory yard, two light delivery trucks pulled up. The gateman with the lynx eyes had passed them without the inspection he was supposed to make. They rolled to a stop just outside the building in which Carol was now getting ready to punch her time card.

She removed the card from its slot, inserted it into the clock and pulled the lever to punch it. As the lever came down, there was an explosion. The glass face of the clock flew into a thousand pieces and a stream of yellow fog emanated from it. Further down the corridor other jets of yellow smoke were emitted from chinks in the wall. Carol reeled back. Involuntarily she took in one choking gasp of air. For a moment she thought her lungs would burst. A cloudy film came over her eyes. She felt as though giant fingers were strangling her.

A factory guard, entering the corridor from outside, saw men and women dropping to the floor, overcome by the yellow fog. He opened his mouth to scream a warning, his hand whipping his gun from its holster, but behind him appeared a scowling man with a gun in his hand. The weapon rose and fell. The guard took the blow squarely on the top of his head and without a sound he collapsed, limp as an empty sack.

Carol was aware of falling. It seemed miles before she struck the floor. Then, as through a dim haze, she saw the hawk-faced man with a dripping cloth pressed against his nose and

mouth, bend down beside her. She wanted to scream, but every muscle and nerve was paralyzed. He picked her up, let the wet cloth fall to the floor and was very careful not to breathe again until he was outside where fresh air dissipated the asphyxiating fumes.

MEN were jumping from the light delivery trucks that had pulled up. Each wore a gas mask that made a nightmarish monster of him. They sped into the yellow-fog-filled corridor, darted through it and into the room where the mixture of newly invented powder was stored. There wasn't much of it, but they took every ounce they could find. Then they rushed back and clambered into the trucks.

One of them listened to orders from Karl, the hawk-faced man, nodded and touched his gas masked forehead in a stiff salute. He climbed into the truck, shoved Carol's inert form far up inside and proceeded to tie and gag her.

Employees were rushing up now. Leading them was Butch. He alone saw Karl sidle back into the gas-filled corridor. Butch grimly watched factory doctors bring him back to consciousness again ten minutes later.

"I do not know what happened," Karl said. "Someone punched the time clock and then it all began. That gas—I was knocked out at once."

Karl was helped to his feet.

"It was a harmless gas, but it knocked out everyone in that corridor," he explained. Spies, Karl. They stole every grain of Mixture fifty-four. They must be crazy, for the formula for that stuff is no deep secret. Well—get everyone back to work who is able to work. I've got to see the super and make a report. Trouble, trouble! This damn factory thrives on it."

Karl watched the assistant superintendent hurry away. He smiled complacently, spat on the ground and turned about. For a moment Karl was hypnotized into a state of inaction.

That brute of a man whom he had bumped into and cursed, was standing not fifteen feet away and regarding him as a serpent might look at a bird before it pounced. Karl shivered, drew himself up and scowled.

"You do not look like the gas hurt you much," the foreman growled. "Get back to work or draw your pay and get out of here."

Butch grunted and sluggishly obeyed. Karl's right hand touched a flat, unobtrusive object in his hip pocket, beneath his overalls. Then he shrugged. That big ape was too stupid looking to know anything. Even if he had noticed Karl, what matter? Big or small, nosey men dropped before the flaming muzzle of the gun he carried. Karl strolled over to the gatehouse.

"The trucks passed through without being noticed," the gatekeeper told him in a whisper. "It worked like a charm."

Karl nodded and turned back. Everything had progressed with the smoothness that only the well oiled machine built up by the spy leader could have accomplished. Yet Karl had a feeling, far back in his mind, that all wasn't well. That hulking giant of a man with those cold, deadly eyes. If only he hadn't been around, Karl would have felt much better.

All afternoon Karl was too busy to think of Butch again. Government agents asked him dozens of questions. He lied fluently and they believed him. After all, Karl was a trusted employee with a fine record that extended over a period of years. What the government agents didn't know was the fact that Karl was the nucleus of a massive spy organization that had grown rapidly until it was now capable of inflicting terrific losses upon every industry in the United States which was connected with the manufacture of munitions.

Karl was thirty minutes late when he checked out. He climbed into his cheap, second hand car and drove straight home. He lived alone in a two-room house set well apart from the

other factory houses. It was better that way. No one to ask stupid questions. Karl was actually glowing as he shut off the motor of his car.

Soon now, very soon, he'd be given a promotion and more pay. The factory paid him a good wage, but Karl was ambitious. He wanted to stand beside the unknown leader of the spy ring and receive some of the salutes from the more humble of the operatives. Things were going along nicely.

Karl opened the door of his little house, closed it behind him and slid home a huge bolt. Then he turned on the lights. For a full minute he was certain that his eyes and his mind played him tricks. The hulk of a man whom he had cursed and feared was sitting at Karl's own table, eating Karl's own food.

CHAPTER XIII

Influence of Fear



KARL reached for his gun, his thin face venomous. Quick as a flash the hulking Butch arose, gave the table a lusty shove toward the enraged Karl just as the latter sprang forward with clubbed gun in upraised hand. Butch leaped for the other side of the room.

With a howl of triumph the treacherous foreman evaded the crashing table and reversed his gun to fire. He never made it. A catsup bottle sailed across the room and collided violently with his forehead. The cap was off, and the stuff splattered all over him. He reeled back against the wall and a glassy look came into his eyes.

Before he could recover, a vast hand had him by the throat while its mate disarmed him with ridiculous ease.

"Get nasty, will you?" boomed a mighty voice. "And me just havin' a little sociable snack while I was waitin' for you to come home. Now we're gonna have a little talk about puttin' girls in trucks and haulin' 'em away. This catsup ain't nothin' to what you're gonna look like if you don't talk straight, pal. Know what I mean?"

Karl showed that he understood quite plainly by the glint of terror in his eyes. Then, before he could answer, he was shaken like a terrier shakes a rat and fairly thrown across the room onto the couch. Butch then calmly peeled off his coat.

"I don't like to get my clothes all covered with blood," he explained. "It don't wash out like catsup, see?"

"Blood?" Karl repeated with a gasp of horror.

"Yeah. Yours, Dutchie," Butch went on conversationally as he rolled up his sleeves. "That is, unless you got more sense than I give you credit for. You

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THE BEST COMEDY IN AMERICA

FICTION • SATIRE • CARTOONS

ON SALE EVERYWHERE!

see, that girl you had your pals cart away this afternoon is a friend of mine. I was watchin' you, and I know you had her snatched. Also you knew all about that funny business with the knockout gas. You didn't get knocked stiff until long after everybody else did. Then you took a whiff of that stuff so you'd fall on the floor and be a big hero."

"Wh-what do you mean?" Karl quavered. This wasn't spy work, facing an inhuman giant like this. A man who talked calmly of spilling blood and who was so huge that no ordinary man could escape him.

"Where is the girl, buddy? And it better be the truth because the last guy I handled this way, didn't live. Maybe you want a sample of my work, huh?"

Butch's hamlike paw gripped Karl's leg just above the ankle, and squeezed. Karl gave a bleat of pain and Butch grinned. That hadn't hurt the guy much, but like the Black Bat always said, scare a guy enough and he'll think you're killing him.

"No-no, do not break my leg," Karl yelled. "I don't know anything about a girl. I swear it! I'll give you money—lots of money! A thousand dollars! I have it! Wait—let me go and I'll show you."

"Why?" Butch asked patiently. "If I wanted your dough, I'd wring your neck and take it. But I don't see? I want to know where that girl was taken and in about half a minute you're goin' to wish you'd told me, pal. After I finish, you'll only be able to walk again with a crutch. Wise up. Where is she?"

Karl gulped. Through his mind flashed a picture of himself hobbling on crutches. This was wrong. He was supposed to be in the place of this big man. He was supposed to be doing the threatening and the crippling. No man could do this to him—Karl Hannemann—who was on his way to becoming one of the shrewdest spies in the business.

Then Karl gave a piercing yell of agony. He could feel the arteries and

veins bursting in his leg. He could feel bones grinding against one another. He knew what crushed veins meant—amputation. He screamed again.

BUTCH'S features didn't alter in the least. He retained his grip on Karl's leg, rubbed the lobe of his ear with the other hand and looked down at his quivering victim.

"You better tell me where the girl is, pal. Next time you won't yell because you'll pass out. It ain't so nice when you wake up. Take it from me, it ain't. The last guy I tackled like this—"

"Stop," Karl moaned. "*Himmel*, you are killing me! I cannot stand it. I will talk. I will tell you anything you want to know. I swear it. Only let go of my leg. I cannot stand it."

Butch's grip relaxed. Karl's leg was only faintly bruised. Butch had never studied psychology nor any kindred subjects pertaining to the human mind. All he knew was that if you talked tough and pretended hard enough, the other guy usually came through. The Bat had taught him that lesson and it sunk deeply into Butch's brain.

"She has been taken to Philadelphia," Karl groaned. "My leg—I know it is broken in several places. You cannot do this to me."

"Where, in Philly?" Butch asked and his fingers touched Karl's ankle again.

"To a house on the corner of Andover Street and some avenue. I am not sure. That is the truth—I would not lie to you."

"O'course, you wouldn't," Butch said. He reached down, lifted Karl from bed and carried him over to a small closet. "While you was delayed at the factory," he explained, "I did a little work here. I ripped out part of the closet floor, but so's I could put it back again and nobody'd ever see what I done. Then I dug a hole in the ground."

"Now, pal, I know you wouldn't lie to me because I like you, see? And you like me only maybe you don't know

that yet. So I'm takin' your word that the girl is in Philly. But just to make sure, I'll tie you up and stick you in that hole I made. If the girl is where you say she is, I'll be back in a day or two. But if she ain't—well, I gotta find her.

"If I had to start really lookin', I might not be back for a week or more. Nobody'd find you in that hole and maybe you'd starve. It ain't so nice dyin' that way. But here I am shootin' off my mouth when I know, and you know, I'll be back before you look like a skeleton, because you wouldn't lie."

Butch opened the closet door, and Karl let out a wail.

"No! I make a mistake. She is not in Philadelphia. I forgot. They are taking her to an island—it is known as Green Cove and is two miles off shore. But if you go after here, they will kill you, and I will starve. You cannot leave me here, buried in the ground where I will never be found."

Butch drew Karl very close to him and suddenly hurled the man clear across the room. He hit the wall, knocked a picture off a nail and slid to the floor groaning dismally. Butch walked over to him, dragged him to his feet again and waved a mighty fist in front of his nose.

"You're a sucker for bloody stories, pal. I ain't goin' to bury you, but I don't like your puss so I'll change it a little—before I call in the cops."

HE used his fist twice and then he let Karl drop to the floor. He blew on his knuckles a moment and then tied his victim up. He stuffed him in the closet—where there wasn't a sign of an excavation—and locked the door on him.

Butch sauntered out of the little house, casually walked over to Karl's sedan and got in. He drove straight to the city, parked and entered the railroad station. He squeezed his bulk into a phone booth and dialed the long distance operator. He kept watching out of the booth window for signs of men

who might have trailed him. But Butch was reasonably certain no one suspected him and that none had witnessed his little act at Karl's house.

"Hello, Silk," he said. "Yeah, it's me. Listen, they got Carol. Snatched her right under my nose. Huh? Sure I know where she is. There's a island called Green Cove two miles off shore. They took her there. You tell certain parties, will you? I'll meet you on the island. Who? Me? Nuts, huh? Listen, maybe you're smarter'n me, but I ain't no slouch when it comes to handling my dukes and, mister, this job calls for stuff like that. I said I'd be seein' you on the island."

Butch hung up with a grin. Then he rubbed his chin. He consulted a phone book and called the offices of the F.B.I. in a neighboring city.

"This," he announced, "is a pal of Uncle Sam, see? You guys remember that mess at the Acme plant this afternoon? Well, the guy that did it is Karl, a foreman. He is tied up in his house. Tell him if he don't talk, a certain guy will come back and squeeze his leg some more. And listen—the gateman is in cahoots with him. So long!"

Butch hung up and had presence of mind enough to hurry away from the phone as fast as possible. Even before he turned the corner three blocks away, he heard police sirens.

CHAPTER XIV

Island of Danger



CAROL awoke with a splitting headache and the strange feeling that she was in a pitching boat. She opened her eyes and looked up at a starry sky. Then she tried to move, only to find that her ankles and wrists were securely tied. Someone came over beside her. A flashlight was

turned on and her bonds examined. The man grunted and disappeared again. But Carol was certain that she was on some kind of a boat, for each step this man took made the craft rock from side to side.

Memory returned and she recalled the exploding time clock and the hawk-faced foreman carrying her into the open. But what else had happened? Where was Butch?

Carol didn't have time to give further thought to him. She felt the bow of the craft scrape against a rocky beach. Two men picked her up and carried her ashore.

They wended their way along a crooked path between heavily foliaged trees until they reached a clearing. There Carol saw her first glimpse of lights. There was some kind of a house, a big place, if the reception hall was any indication. Carol's captors sat her down and one of them slit the ropes around her ankles. He was a red-faced, straw-haired youth..

"You may walk now, *Fraulein*. Later, if you do not disobey, we shall free your hands as well. You will follow me, please."

Carol found that walking was rather difficult for her feet seemed paralyzed from the ropes that had almost shut off the blood supply. She was taken to a small room equipped with a huge, black leather chair standing in one corner and a straight-backed, uncomfortable looking chair in the center of the floor. Her guide indicated that she was to sit down in the straight-backed chair. He withdrew after a whispered warning that she was only to be questioned.

Suddenly the lights went out. Carol half arose from her chair. A low, whispered voice came from the vicinity of the leather chair in the corner.

"Don't move! We mean you no harm here, *Fraulein*, if you will coöperate with us. There is no use to lie for we know everything. Yesterday, for instance, you visited Colonel Rapport of the Raritan Arsenal. You took to him

certain plans and photographs. You were observed there and carefully watched. You were well dressed, apparently had plenty of money. But this morning you turned up at the Acme Dye Works, dressed cheaply and looking for a low-paid job. Will you inform me what division of the United States Service you are connected with?"

"You've got a lot to learn," Carol retorted. "Some of it is going to surprise you. Take that skinny-faced foreman spy of yours at the Acme. You probably think he's so safely entrenched that he's immune. I'd hate to bet much on where he is now."

Carol tried to penetrate the darkness for a glimpse at this unknown power behind the spy ring. She had no doubts but that this man was the one responsible for everything that had happened so far. But even the man's voice gave no indication as to his identity.

He spoke in that stagy whisper again. "Bluffing rarely works with me. Karl will never be suspected and if there were another counter-espionage agent in the factory, we should know about that, too. Our organization, you see, is much more efficient than any your government has yet devised. Now we must get down to business. Why were you sent to the Acme Dye Works? Who sent you?"

SHE was trying to slide the ropes off her wrists. If she could only get her hands free while she was alone with this man who needed darkness to shield his face. One good look at him, a quick dash for help, and she'd clinch the whole case. She had no idea where she was and despite the boat trip, it never occurred to her that this might be an island.

"You refuse to answer?" the man in the darkness snapped. "Very well. There will be plenty of time for later discussions. We have methods that usually work. You will be locked up without food or water until you send me word that you will tell everything."

Carol heard the sound of muffled hands clap twice. The door opened behind her and the straw-haired youth came in. He helped her up, gave her a rough push as they went through the door and led her down narrow, dirty steps into a cellar. Carol shivered at the chill that prevailed the place. She saw a stooped man emerge from the shadows, take a key from his pocket and open a thick, wooden door. Carol was thrust inside and the door slammed in her face. She stepped back and gave out with a lusty kick. The only results of the kick consisted of a cry of pain, a sore toe and a slight scratch against a door faced with steel plate.

Carol began walking sideward through the inky darkness, intent on measuring the size of her cell. She banged a shoulder against a wall that also felt as though it was made of steel. Finally she all but fell over a low stool and she sat down on it with a weary sigh. Her wrists were still tied behind her and they ached from finger tips to elbows. There wasn't even a barred window in the cell. Only the feel of silt on the floor.

She concentrated all her thinking powers on a plan to get free. Her wrists first, of course. When they brought her dinner, she'd make them free her. But—there was going to be no dinner. No water either, for that matter. Carol suddenly began to feel hungry. She forced her thoughts to other things. If she could hold out long enough, there would be a chance. Butch had suspected that hawk-faced man named Karl. When Butch missed her, he'd look up Karl and if the spy refused to talk, Butch would promptly call in the Bat!

After a long wait a key scratched on the outside of the door and finally the bolt turned. The stooped man came in, holding a knife in one gnarled hand. He scowled at her.

"Swine of an American spy," he hissed. "If I had my way, you would be at once killed. However, I am not

the master here. I was ordered to free your hands. Turn around and do not move for the knife I hold is sharp and eager."

Carol let him cut her arms loose. She turned around, looked at the stooped man and had to repress a shudder. He was an evil looking gnome with long hair, matted beard and yellow, rotten teeth. She chafed her wrists for a moment, then swayed and toppled to the floor. The guard uttered an exclamation of surprise and bent closer to peer at her.

Carol knew it was now or never. Her right hand had been feverishly scraping up the dust on the floor. Now she moved swiftly and flung the handful of silt squarely into his face.

The stuff struck the guard full in the eyes. He gave a yell of pain and frustration, made a savage, sweeping lunge to grab Carol and missed her by more than a foot. She arose, raised her foot, removed one of the cheap and rather heavy shoes and used it in a well aimed blow. Her guard pitched forward on his face and lay groaning. Carol extracted the cell key from his clenched fingers by using the heel of her shoe again. Then she backed out of the cell, locked the door and flung the key into the furnace.

WHILE she put the shoe back on her foot, she took in the situation at a glance. To risk passing through the upstairs part of the house was as foolish as it was impracticable. She headed for the cellar hatch, raised the hatch cover slightly and made sure no one observed her exit.

A minute later she was scampering between the tall, thickly branched trees. This path took her back to the beach. There was no escape there. Perhaps in the opposite direction, she might discover a highway and help. She skirted the big house, saw a huge, rifle-armed guard slowly pacing a beat and ducked just in time to avoid being spotted.

Then minutes later she stood on

another beach, and slowly the full realization came to her that this was an island, so far off the mainland that no lights were visible. Swimming back was out of the question, and how could anyone hide on a tiny island infested with a score or more of armed spies?

If mental telepathy really did exist, then Tony Quinn would come very soon. But Carol didn't believe too strongly in it. Tony Quinn, Butch and Silk were probably searching every likely spot where she might have been taken. Yet how would they ever discover that she was a prisoner on an island? Carol sat down on a stump and felt the full pangs of despair.

Then she heard a shout. It was taken up at points all about her. She heard men crashing through the brush. Her escape had been discovered. Carol jumped to her feet and plunged into the brush. There must be a boat somewhere along the water. If she could manage to reach it, there was a chance. Someone blundered close by and she hardly dared to breathe! Men were talking and shouting, but she didn't understand German and derived no benefit from their words. She did realize that they were forming a circle and grimly closing in. Flashlights parted the darkness and made escape all the more difficult and doubtful.

She stumbled over a thick branch, picked it up and in desperation ripped away the small branches to fashion a sort of club for herself. One of the spies blundered close, swept the ray of his flash in a wide swathe and for an instant Carol was revealed. The man gave a lusty shout of triumph and charged.

Carol ducked to one side and, as the spy almost grabbed her, brought down the club. It whacked against his shoulder with enough force to make him drop his gun. Before he could recover his wits, the club came down once more. This time Carol aimed better and she broke the branch in half across the man's skull. He slid to the ground

and lay very still, scarcely breathing.

Others were coming in answer to his shout. Carol seized the flashlight, masked its lens with her other hand and allowed only a tiny ray to filter between her fingers. Using this to sweep the ground, she found the gun dropped by the spy. With this heavy weapon in her little fist she felt considerably better.

Now she changed her entire tactics. Instead of running like a hare before the hounds, she turned back and headed straight toward the big house. She reasoned that practically every man would be hunting for her and that might leave the spy master alone. No one had ever found it necessary to teach Carol resourcefulness. That had been born and bred into her. The heavy gun was making her hand tired, but she clung to it, her small jaws grimly planted together, her senses attuned for any sight or sound of a guard.

THE cellar hatchway yawned wide open. Probably the spies had searched the cellar first and used this door as an exit. She slipped inside. Reaching the cellar door that led into the first floor corridor was a simple task. She turned the knob very slowly, opened the door a crack and peered out. Risking everything, Carol began moving toward the various rooms leading off the hall.

She heard the sound of measured strides, as if a man paced the floor monotonously. Carol pulled back a drape. In a lighted room she saw a man, hands clenched behind his back, head lowered, striding back and forth as though trying to wear a path in the rug. Carol slipped up behind him.

"Don't move or give a signal!" she warned. "Starve me to death, will you? Not a word! Walk over to that closet door, open it and step inside! Keep your hands up!"

The man was white as paper and he obeyed her orders to the letter without a word. He backed into the closet.

Carol knocked a hat off a hook and kicked it toward him.

"Pick it up," she ordered.

The man bent down, and Carol smacked him across the back of the head with her gun butt. Then she shoved him inside the closet, closed the door and locked it. What to do next was a problem. Then she heard heavy footsteps. At least three men were coming into the house by way of the front door.

Carol ducked behind a big chair that hid her slim body very well. She almost gave a cry or horror when he saw who was being led into the room. Butch, his face matted with blood, marched before two of the scowling guards. They had guns drilling into the small of his back.

CHAPTER XV

The Missing Man



FORCED over against the wall, Butch O'Leary waited. His two guards stepped back with leveled guns. Suddenly it came to Butch what a fool he'd been—thinking he could invade this island alone when he should have known there would be a score of desperate men on it.

Three minutes after he slipped out of a dory and waded ashore, they had him. Now it looked very much like the finish of everything. These men had appointed themselves his official execution squad.

"Drop your guns!" a woman's voice ordered crisply. The two spies turned and gaped, but they let go of their weapons. Carol stepped from behind the chair and waved to Butch. His swollen lips parted in a huge grin. He hitched up his pants a notch, rubbed his face with a big hand and then

stepped toward the two spies. His hands shot out, grabbed each man by the nape of the neck and brought their heads together with a crack. Both spies slumped to the floor.

"Nice goin,' Carol," Butch grinned. "Where's the rest of this mob? They walloped me with their guns and I feel like socking a few guys to make up for it."

"Butch—did you come alone?" Carol asked.

Butch nodded. "Yeah. I had a little talk with the guy who snatched you. He told me about this place so I just moseyed over here. But before I left, I phoned the party you're thinking of, and told him where you was. All we got to do is hold out until he shows up."

Carol motioned toward the guns on the floor. "Take them and don't be afraid to use them. These men are killers, every one. Maybe we can hold out."

The stooped, wizened man who had been appointed Carol's jailor, suddenly shuffled by the door and glanced inside. He gave a leap, a howl of fear, and raced for the door, calling the others. Butch surged into the hallway, seized the man and flung him completely across the porch.

Guns cracked and bullets whizzed by Butch's ear. He ducked, slammed the door shut and then broke a small window beside it. He thrust one weapon through the shattered glass and squeezed the trigger a few times. The shooting outside died away miraculously.

Carol ran to the rear of the house and took up a stand. She saw three men slinking forward, fired just above their heads and watched them dash for a safer spot. But Carol wasn't kidding herself. She and Butch couldn't possibly hold out for very long. Unless the Bat came promptly, they'd be killed. Those spies would show little mercy now.

Dimly she made out the forms of two more men carefully making their way

toward the side of the house. They crouched behind a tree, held guns ready and were looking for a target. To shoot in their direction Carol would have to rush to another side of the house and leave the rear unguarded. Butch was busy at the front.

Then Carol saw a dark form suddenly sail through the air. It looked like a giant bat with ribbed wings spread in a soaring flight. She saw one of the men do down and stay there. The other tried to raise his gun. There was an explosion and a streak of fire from beside the object that looked like a bat. The spy doubled up and his gun fell from limp fingers.

THE three men at the back of the house wheeled and raced in the direction of the shot. Carol pumped a bullet toward them. They paused and in doing so spelled doom for themselves. An avalanche of fury surged from behind a bush. This man was smaller than any of his antagonists, but he fought like a demon. Then the winged man joined in the fight. Two minutes later the three spies lay inert.

The slightly built man and the eerie figure with hood and wings rushed toward the back door. Carol unlocked it, held it wide, and they catapulted in. Carol rushed into the Bat's arms. He held her close for a moment or two. Then he signaled Silk to go upstairs and cover the west side of the house.

Butch wheeled, gave a shout of welcome and at the same time issued some news.

"Say, Boss, these guys have had enough. No kiddin'. I can see them running like crazy guys right down to the water. Want I should go after 'em?"

"Stay with Carol," the Bat told him. "Silk, come back down here quickly."

Silk and the Bat raced out into the night. They noticed that the men with whom they had fought were gone—all but one and he seemed to be dead. They could hear the others splashing

into the sea. The Bat topped a small knoll overlooking the ocean and he gave vent to a gasp of astonishment. All the spies on the island were swimming madly—straight toward Europe.

"They're crazy," Silk panted. "They're headed in the wrong direction."

"Listen, Silk," the Bat said and motioned for silence. He raised the hood over one ear and his acute hearing detected a soft purring sound and then the swish of water.

"Silk," he said slowly, "there's a submarine out there. That's what those men are headed for. Back to the house. They may shell this island. I have a power launch on the lee side. The water between the island and the mainland is too shallow for a sub to navigate. Step on it!"

The Bat started down the knoll, but as he did so, the sub's motors grew stronger than ever. The Bat peered straight out into the darkness that covered the ocean. To his amazingly keen sight, the darkness parted and revealed a huge, long distance cruising sub above the surface with men crawling over her hull and hurrying toward the tiny deck. The Bat called to Silk and stayed there, watching. The turret hatch slammed shut. The sub moved out into deeper water and nosed under.

"They're afraid we're here in force," the Bat told Silk. "They won't return. Now let's find out what Carol has learned."

Butch had some highly significant news.

"Gosh, Boss," he addressed the Bat, "the cellar is packed to the ceiling with all kinds of stuff. Food, gasoline, cans of oil and a lot of clothes. Maybe they were goin' to stay here for a couple of years, huh?"

"Wrong, Butch," the Bat said. "This island was being turned into a refueling base for Nazi subs. I don't think they used it before this particular time, but it's an ideal spot. Now let's search this place thoroughly."

CAROL moved toward the closer door. "I have a surprise for you, darling. Inside that closet is the ring leader of this whole business. I caught him red-handed and I hope I broke his skull. Telling me I could talk or starve to death."

The Bat gasped. "Silk! Butch! Get out of the room. I don't want this man to see you. Carol, he interviewed you in darkness, I suppose. That means he hasn't had a good look at your face, either. I don't want anyone to be able to identify you three later on as aides of mine. Keep under cover until I wrap up our friend for delivery."

The Bat drew his gun, took the key which Carol handed him and walked up to the closet door. He turned the lock open, yanked the door wide and stepped back.

"Come out of there—and remember I'll shoot if you so much as turn a hair."

A man staggered out of the closet, caressing his skull and groaning. He straightened up, his mouth opened wide and his eyes grew round and terror-filled as he looked at the hooded, caped figure standing before him. But his awed look was matched by the Bat under that hood.

It was Fisk!

"Sit down," the Bat ordered. "How did you get here?"

"Who—who are you?" Fisk quavered. "I've been through so much these last few days that I think I've gone crazy. You can't be real, or is this another one of your damned tricks?"

"Calm yourself," the Bat urged. "Tell me how you got here."

Something in the quality of the Bat's voice inspired Fisk to trust him.

"I saw those two men sitting there—dead. Dead, I tell you, and nobody had even been near them! I lost my head and ran away because I'd received threats that if I didn't resign from the Society Americana, I'd be dead too. So I ran away. I stopped at my bank, cashed a check and then came here to my island."

"Your island?" the Bat asked in surprise.

"Yes. It's been mine for years. I built this house on it. I thought I'd be safe here, but those men must have been using my island for weeks. I don't know who they were, but they took me prisoner the moment I landed and almost killed me. Then a girl put a gun against my back, forced me into the closet and hit me over the head. If much more of this happens, I'll go stark mad."

"Compose yourself," the Bat said. "To ease your mind, I'll tell you this. I am the Black Bat! Your island was taken over by spies and sailors from a Nazi submarine. They intended to use it as a base. In your cellar are food and fuel to supply raiding subs. Now let me get this straight. Tell me everything that happened from the moment you arrived at the meeting of the society. Lockhart made a statement that you knew part of what Sloane and Collier were going to reveal. Is that true?"

"Yes, I do. But it wasn't enough. I don't know who the leader of the spy ring was. They just told me what this fiend had up his sleeve. That's why I knew they'd try to kill me next. I couldn't help anybody much, and anyhow Lockhart knows everything that I do. Didn't he tell?"

"Lockhart is presumably dead," the Bat explained. "Now get on with it please."

"Lockhart, too? My God! I met Lockhart before the rest of the members showed up. He told me that after this meeting we would all be famous and held as public benefactors. Sloane and Collier had found out that the spies are all ready to blow up every munitions and airplane factory in the whole United States, that battleships will be sabotaged, merchant shipping blown to smithereens. Oh—it was awful listening to them."

"Then Lockhart showed me the pocket watch he was wearing. First

time I ever saw him with one. Seems that Sloane gave it to him—"

"A pocket watch!" the Bat broke in. "What happened to it?"

FISK heaved a sigh. "At least, I know that's safe. Lockhart gave it to me, told me to guard it with my life. I still can't see what a pocket watch has to do with all this, but I realized from Lockhart's manner that it must be very important. So, when I stopped at the bank to draw some cash, I also put the watch in my vault."

"Then you can turn it over to me?" the Bat asked.

"Why not?" Fisk answered. "All I have to do is open my vault at the Security National Bank."

"Stay here!" the Bat ordered. He hurried into the corridor and signaled Carol, Butch and Silk into another room.

"Fisk may be telling the truth. All of you heard his story and he really looks as though he's been through a lot. Fisk has the mysterious watch we've heard so much about. There are two power launches beached on the leeward side of the island. You three take one and return to Burgoyne."

"Silk, you are to disguise yourself and meet Fisk in front of his bank—the Security National. I'll arrange it so he will turn over the watch to you. Carol, you helped to break up a vicious rendezvous that violates all the neutrality laws of the country. I'll notify the F.B.I. to come out here and take charge. Now all three of you get away from here so Fisk can't ever say he can recognize any of the Bat's assistants. Leave me the speed-boat. I'll have a look around here before I leave."

He watched them hurry away into the darkness and the Bat felt inordinately proud of them. They were as dependable as time itself.

The Bat looked in at Fisk, saw that he had relaxed against the cushions of a davenport and seemed to be sleeping. The Bat invaded one room after an-

other, finding only more and more evidence that the island and this house had been turned into a supply base. But one room had only a long workbench in it. The Bat saw a pile of bricks on the floor. Every one had been broken open and the inside gouged out. There was red brick dust everywhere.

He yanked open drawers, pulled the contents of supply cabinets onto the floor and discovered a maze of tools and several pieces of thick steel.

"Battleship armor plate," he told himself grimly. "And a lot of small holes have been drilled through it, lengthwise. Why? What kind of devil's work was turned out here?"

He took along samples, roused Fisk, and they hurried away from the house. The fast speed-boat was waiting, and they raced back toward the mainland.

"Go to a hotel," the Bat ordered Fisk. "Register under an assumed name. Tomorrow exactly at ten o'clock, go to your bank. Just stand around and you will be approached by a man who will identify himself to you as Mr. Mortimer Cambridge. Give him the watch and then return to the hotel. Don't forget, Fisk—Lockhart is supposed to be dead. Attempts were made to kill Hugh Brooks and Durrance. Fouquet was stabbed through the heart. These spies mean business and now that we have them on the run, they'll be desperate."

CHAPTER XVI

Mined Walls



DEAD tired, Tony Quinn slept until noon the next day. Silk brought early afternoon papers which contained a vivid story of how the Coast Guard had discovered an island within the lawful limits of United States waters being

used as a submarine base. Quinn read the items only briefly for he had something much more important on his mind. Silk took a thin pocket watch out of his vest pocket and handed it to Quinn. It was the watch over which more than one man had lost his life.

Tony Quinn made a quick examination of the time piece and with every tick of its second hand he grew more and more puzzled. He checked the time with an electric clock. The watch was more than two hours slow.

"I set it, sir, at ten o'clock," Silk said. "Did it automatically. I hope nothing's wrong."

"You set it at ten o'clock?" Quinn rubbed his chin in thought. "What kind of a valuable watch loses two hours every three hours? There's nothing inside that is at all significant, Silk. Unless you call deliberately filing away the serial numbers of the movement. That's not significant—it's foolish, because anyone can bring them out again. We'll try. Any more of those mysterious explosions or any theory as to what caused them?"

"No, sir," Silk said. "Nothing. I don't like to remind you, sir, but have you forgotten that all of us are in considerable danger? Someone entered the laboratory and destroyed the model of that factory, you know."

"I haven't forgotten," Quinn said grimly, "but I'm not as worried about it as I was before. What we must do immediately is to trace this watch and find out what bearing it has on the case, also just what made Rigby say there were watches that flew. This one hasn't any wings."

Quinn ate a quick breakfast and for the time being assumed his role of a blind man. Not until he was inside his laboratory, did he drop that pose. There he carefully placed the watch on a small stand, turned a powerful light on it and made an examination of the scraped surface where the serial numbers had been. With a minute piece of cotton, soaked in a powerful acid, he

carefully cleansed away the marks made by a sharp chisel.

Slowly the numbers came back. Not sharply, but enough so that they could be identified. Quinn called Silk, gave him a piece of paper bearing the numbers and ordered him to proceed to a safe spot, phone the watch manufacturer and find out to what jeweler this watch had been shipped.

While Silk was gone, Tony Quinn occupied his chair before the fireplace, his cane between his knees as he stared blankly into space. He could think best by assuming the pose of a blind man. He went over all the facts in the case. Fisk seemed out of it entirely. Lockhart, his fingerprints strewn all around, seemed to be the most logical suspect. It was a clever trick to substitute a corpse to account for his own death.

Hugh Brooks seemed to have something on his mind, too, and Durrance certainly rated a careful investigation. The matter of that explosion in the secret lab was gradually becoming clearer to Quinn. He needed only one piece of evidence to convince him of the truth behind the spy ring. And there wasn't much time to lose. Still he had to wait until nightfall, for the Bat operated best in darkness.

Silk returned in a hurry. "This watch, along with ninety-nine others exactly like it, was shipped to Leander the Jeweler. I pretended to be Lieutenant McGrath, sir, and they gave me all the information I wanted. They remembered the case because Leander called up and wanted that big lot shipped by special messenger. Looked like he had orders for the whole bunch of 'em."

TONY QUINN arose. "Get the town car out, Silk. We're going for a drive. I want a look at Leander's place. I may want to invade it after hours."

"Case the joint, eh?" Silk grinned.

Traffic policemen recognized Tony

Quinn's car and saluted it even though they were sure Tony Quinn couldn't see them do it. Silk usually waved in answer. They were stopped for a traffic light at a busy intersection when a police car, siren screaming, weaved in and out of traffic. Quinn's staring eyes betrayed no surprise or interest, but they had observed Lieutenant McGrath riding that cruiser and where McGrath went, trouble must have arrived only seconds before. Quinn leaned forward.

"Follow the police car, Silk. Let's see what's going on."

They soon saw. One obliging patrolman let Quinn's car through the blocked-off area. Before a jewelry store bearing a sign, "Leander, The Jeweler," was parked McGrath's car. While Quinn watched, he saw a morgue wagon roll up. Silk stopped right behind McGrath's cruiser and when the detective-lieutenant emerged, he grimaced, walked up to the town car and put one foot on the running board.

"Interesting, ain't it, Mr. Quinn?" he said. "Ever see a place cleaned out like that joint was?"

"I'm sorry," Quinn replied softly. "You'll have to describe what's happened. My eyes aren't at their best this morning."

McGrath flushed, scratched his neck in embarrassment and talked. "This jewelry store was just stuck up and the guy who owns it was knocked off. They put a forty-five slug between his eyes for no reason at all. The poor guy was even handing the stuff out of the safe when they let him have it. Six masked hoods, but we'll get a line on 'em soon. They swiped every record of every sale he'd made in the last couple of years."

"Then it should be a simple case," Quinn said. "Perhaps Leander was a fence and those crooks had it in for him. I hope you land them, Lieutenant."

As Silk slowly backed away McGrath

added significantly, "I don't know how you guess them things, Mr. Quinn, but Leander was a fence and a high-class one. He'd buy or sell anything, including a guy's gold teeth, if there was two cents' profit for him."

Quinn leaned back against the cushions of his car during the ride home. His agile mind was working at a-mile-a-minute clip. How had the spy ring acted so swiftly? How had they realized that the Bat had learned the source of their mysterious watch? The jeweler had been murdered for one reason—to shut him up. Quinn tapped Silk on the shoulder.

"I think I'd like a long ride this afternoon. Know the way to Burgoyne? That's the place where I sent Carol and Butch. I want to look at that factory just as soon as it's dark. Then back to town for a night of hard and dangerous work. I brought along another set of pictures you took of that model factory. Lucky we still had the negatives. My other equipment is under me. I'm sitting on it."

Silk let out a war whoop of laughter. "And McGrath stood there, two feet away from the evidence he's been wanting for months. Would he be burned up if he knew it!"

SHORTLY after dark, the Bat and Silk were huddled behind one of the small outlying supply sheds which were part of the Acme Dye Works. The Bat studied the photographs which Silk had taken, without the aid of light.

"There was a reason why those tiny bricks in that model were removable," he said softly. "Of course, the model didn't have nearly as many bricks as the factory walls we're looking at now, but I have a plan. About two feet from the ground, along the northwest corner of the building we ought to discover an interesting state of affairs. Let's see."

They made their stealthy way forward. Ever since the spy ring had raided the place, more guards had been

assigned, but they centered their attentions on entrances and exits. The Bat and Silk were concealed in the shadows of a corner where there wasn't even a window. The Bat picked up a small stone, gently tapped each brick, starting from the one nearest the ground. He kept one ear glued against the bricks as he tapped them and finally he gave a satisfied nod.

The Bat used a small piece of steel to cut carefully into the mortar that surrounded one brick. At last it slid out into his hand.

"Take a look at that niche in which the brick rested," Quinn said. "Someone cut the original brick out of the wall, very thoroughly cleaned the hole it made and then slid this other brick inside. Wait, and you'll see something else that will surprise you."

Silk, hindered by the darkness, could only see that the Bat carefully rotated this red clay brick in his hands, holding it close to his eyes. Then he grunted, gave a wrench and the brick broke in half. Something spilled out on the ground.

"An explosive," the Bat whispered to Silk. "This entire factory is mined. Bricks have been removed from strategic places and replaced with prepared bricks containing that formula fifty-four so that when the explosion comes, the whole plant will be completely wrecked. An engineer planned this, a sapper did the work, and a disciple of the devil himself originated the idea. They first made a model of this factory—as you have seen. Then they tackled the real thing. Heaven knows how many more plants are mined in exactly the same way."

"But how do they set it off?" Silk asked hoarsely. "If the explosive is inside of a brick, or inside those thick chunks of armor plate which you found on the island, there doesn't seem to be any way to make contact with the explosive."

The Bat dumped the explosive powder out of the brick, put the two pieces

back together and shoved it into its place in the wall. Only a careful inspection would reveal that it had been tampered with. He spread the powder over a considerable area so that in case an attempt was made, it would burn instead of exploding. He covered it with dirt, then motioned Silk to follow. They headed toward the small house where Karl had lived before Butch decided to take a hand in his affairs.

"You asked how they can set off the explosive," the Bat said. "I wish I knew, Silk. However, one fear is gone out of my mind at any rate. No one invaded our secret laboratory. The spies knew that if their model of the Acme plant was examined, their whole scheme might come to light. The model was mined just like the original, as we saw a moment ago."

"The spies must have some kind of a radio impulse or a ray to which this particular explosive responds. They simply toured the town and turned the ray on every place where the model might have been hidden. They probably picked our place because Rigby had talked to me and they knew I was a friend of Commissioner Warner."

"Remember how those gasoline stations and hardware stores blew up? They happened to fall under the influence of that ray or impulse. It seems to have the power of passing through inert substance and exploding gasoline and powder. The hardware stores were hit because the ammunition they carried went off."

HIS valet gave a soft sigh of relief. "Then nobody knows Tony Quinn is the Bat. Gosh, I couldn't sleep nights thinking we were sunk. What's this shack we're heading for, sir?"

"Karl Hannemann, the spy, lived here until Butch turned him over to the authorities. I want a look at his possessions. Let's see what we can do with the lock."

Two minutes' work, and the Bat had

the door open. A search had already been made of the place, but the Bat looked for one particular object and he found it—buried beneath a pile of clothing in a bureau drawer. It was a watch the replica of the one Fisk had turned over. It was still ticking, and it ran almost four hours late. The Bat thrust the watch into his pocket, spent ten minutes looking for other evidence and then gave up.

CHAPTER XVII

Dead Man's Mansion



VERGING on to ten o'clock Silk was driving his blind master through the city street and heading back toward Quinn's residence. He helped Quinn out of the car and escorted him to the door. Silk un-

locked it, turned on lights and they disappeared within the house. Anyone who watched would have caught a brief glimpse of Tony Quinn, cane extended, making his way across the big living room. Quinn found his usual chair, sat down and leaned back, like a man tired from a long ride.

In reality he was thinking hard. The Acme Dye plant was menaced. It could be blasted into complete ruin at the whim of the unknown spy leader. There probably several hundred other factories similarly treated and threatened. It was no longer enough to capture the spy leader and round up his gang. The location of every mined factory must be obtained. The method by which the explosion was to be set off became a matter of vast importance.

Silk drew down the curtains and Quinn examined the watch he had taken from Karl's house. The serial numbers had been scratched away, similar to the one Fisk had turned over. It lost time much too fast to be an

effective timepiece. Posting Silk on guard near the door in case someone approached, Quinn went into his laboratory.

He dropped the mask of blindness completely, thrust a jeweler's glass into his eye and held the watch under a strong light. He noticed that the tiny screws had been tampered with and the metal that protected the works had been gouged. No jeweler would have done this. The watch Fisk had turned over had been similarly marked. Quinn removed the glass from his eye, leaned back in a chair and frowned. For some reason both of these watches had been tampered with and by inexperienced hands.

He had a set of very small tools and fell to work, removing the screws from the watch and revealing its small springs and gears in motion. Yet nothing seemed to be wrong. Nothing extraneous was hidden within the works, there were no messages engraved on any part of the shiny surface.

"If these watches do carry some kind of a message," he reasoned, "it must be very brief and engraved in such small letters that even a jeweler's glass won't detect them. That doesn't seem possible. There is something else—there must be."

Then he gave a grunt of elation and attacked the screw holding the main spring in place.

"If both watches run slow, it's because of the spring," he told himself grimly. "And the mainspring is the only possible place on which a reasonably lengthy message could be written."

The spring flew out of its position. Quinn gently disengaged it, pinned one end on his bench with a weight and then carefully uncoiled it. His amazingly acute eyesight noticed faint scratches on the hard surface of the spring. He seized the jeweler's glass, screwed it into his eye and gave a low, drawn out whistle as tiny letters be-

came very distinguishable to him.

They didn't make sense for they were in some kind of a complicated code. Quinn carefully put all parts of the watch into an envelope and placed this in his safe. He began removing his tweeds and getting his black regalia ready as he called to Silk.

"Stand by," he ordered. "Have Carol and Butch ready, too. We've almost reached the end of our spy trail, Silk. One or two more details and I'll have our man, expose his methods and prevent a holocaust of terror from taking place. I don't believe Lockhart is alive after all. If he isn't then I have a clear idea as to who is behind this."

"But where are you going, sir?" Silk asked.

"To the home of Lockhart who is supposed to be dead. I know a way to settle that problem right now. Find the finger print cards which I worked on. I'll need them."

HOODED and caped, the Black Bat emerged into the night through the high, thick hedge. He approached the Lockhart house very carefully and crouched to become a part of the night shadows as two men swung around one corner of the house. They were probably members of Joe Allen's detective agency, assigned to protect the property of a client whose life they had failed to save.

He waited until they were out of sight, slipped forward quietly and tackled one of the windows. He had it open quickly, hoisted himself to the sill and swung into the big living room. He closed and locked the window after him. His eyes penetrated the darkness easily and he knew exactly what he was looking for.

His crepe-soled shoes allowed him to cross the room without making a sound. He studied the wall intently. Even in the darkness he could see that one small area of wall just below a molding seemed smudged. This was in contrast to the rest of the house

which was kept very immaculate.

The Bat's fingers passed lightly over that section of wall slipped beneath the paneling and discovered that one small section of the wood gave way under pressure. There was a click and a panel slid back to reveal a concealed wall safe. He scanned the surface of the safe and saw myriad scratches in the hard steel. There were several smudges on it, too. He removed a compact finger print outfit from beneath his cloak, turned the muzzle of a small billows on the safe and sprayed a powder on it. The smudges became clearly outlined finger prints.

He studied these prints and compared them with the impressions he had taken from other sources in this same house. They matched! There was no similarity between these prints and the ones taken from the fingers of the dead man at the morgue, identified as Lockhart.

The Bat's face was grim beneath his hood. He made certain that his presence in the house was still unknown to the guards outside and anyone who might be within. Then he pressed an ear against the safe door, removed the silk glove from one hand and gently touched the dial with his finger tips. The combination of his abnormally acute hearing and the sensitiveness of his fingers that months of blindness had brought on, worked beautifully.

In ten minutes the safe door swung open. He hastily wiped the door of the safe until all possibility of leaving his own prints had been removed. Both hands gloved again, he peered into the circular, steel-lined vault. There was a metal box resting on a small shelf. He removed this carefully, touching only the corners of it. Again he used the tiny billows to spray powder on the dark surface of this steel box. More finger prints came out clearly.

The Bat hardly dared to breathe as he began checking these. First he compared them with the prints he had taken from Lockhart's chromium-plated

carafe, his silver-backed brushes and various bottles from his medicine cabinet. The prints did not compare. Next he checked them with the finger prints taken from the dead man in the morgue. They checked, and instantly the whole thing clicked in the Bat's mind.

He put the metal box back into the safe, closed the door and spun the combination. He slid the panel back in place, mopped up traces of finger print powder that had fallen to the floor and then looked around for an exit.

SUDDENLY a challenging voice sent him scurrying for cover. Someone was on the front porch. Joe Allen's private detective guards were probably denying the visitor admission. Then Lieutenant McGrath's voice rose in anger.

"You've seen my badge. You punks ought to know me by sight, anyhow. I'm going into that house without a search warrant and you birds won't stop me. I have a job to do and it's going to be done. Now get out of my way before I call the wagon and have the whole bunch of you thrown in the can."

The front door opened, lights clicked on and there three men stepped into the hall. Behind them came two of Joe Allen's burly detectives. McGrath turned, put the heel of his palm against the chest of the foremost private dick and pushed him out of the house with his companion. He closed the door and locked it.

From a corner of the still darkened living room, the Bat watched McGrath give orders to a slim young man who carried a fingerprint outfit. The third man was Igoe, of the F. B. I.

"I'm not satisfied that Lockhart is dead," growled McGrath. "Why? Because the Black Bat came to the morgue for a very good reason. The only thing I can figure out is he wanted the fingerprints of the corpse. If he thinks maybe that corpse isn't Lockhart's body, I think the same thing. Dolan, look

around and get samples of all the prints you can find."

The fingerprint man scurried upstairs. McGrath slumped into a chair, shoved his hat to the back of his head and scowled.

"You know, Mr. Igoe, this whole case has me buffaloed. I don't know what to make of it. Fisk is missing. Durrance's house got blown apart and he's gone. Somebody drove a knife through Fouquet's heart. Looks to me as though every member of the Society Americana is headed for the grave, if they're not there already. I wonder what the Black Bat knows about this mess. Sometimes I like that guy, but one day I'm putting him where he belongs. I wonder why Dolan hasn't made any noise upstairs?"

Igoe walked to the bottom of the steps and peered up.

"Dolan?" he called. "Dolan are you all right?"

No answer. Igoe gave an exclamation and rushed up the stairs. For a moment he was lost in the darkness. Then McGrath heard a gentle sigh, a crash, and Igoe came rolling down the steps to sprawl unconscious on the landing. There was a huge, rapidly swelling lump on the side of his head and blood ozzed out to mat the hair.

McGrath yanked a gun out of a hip holster, drew a flashlight with the other hand and turned the beam up the staircase. There was no sign of anyone. He crept up the stairs, gun extended, finger white against the trigger. At the top he hesitated, torn between two directions, both dark and none too inviting. He decided to turn left.

As he came around the corner and into the corridor that ran length-wise across the upstairs part of the house, a hand swept out of the darkness, crashed against McGrath's left arm and sent the flashlight rolling across the floor. Its beam flickered in all directions for the switch stayed on. There was a shot from one of the rooms and the flashlight went out with a clatter of

shattered metal and glass.

McGrath fired three times straight into that room, but drew no cry of pain. He was sweating profusely as he knew this was probably the most dangerous spot he'd ever been in. To make matters all the worse he didn't stand a chance of summoning help. To retreat now, even hunt for a telephone, was to give these gunmen the opportunity they sought to shoot him down.

MC GRATH set his back against the wall and kept staring down the corridor. But he couldn't watch both ends of the hallway at the same time. There were two forms slinking toward him, edging their way along the wall with guns half-raised and ready to throw lead. The foremost of the two signaled his companion that he could handle things. He crooked his elbow, supported the gun across that arm and took careful aim, getting McGrath's head squarely in the sights.

McGrath heard the killer's hoarse breathing and started to turn around. There was a single shot, but not from the killer. It came from somewhere downstairs. An expert marksman had fired straight through inky darkness to find a perfect target. The killer stared at his bleeding, numbed hand as his gun clattered to the floor.

"Reach!" McGrath rasped.

Then there were footsteps behind him. He was trapped now. A gun butt swished by his head as he ducked. But the blow landed against his right shoulder with almost bone-shattering force. McGrath groaned. The next blow would get him on the head and that would be the end of all things.

Then McGrath saw an amazing thing happen. A form moved through the darkness, leaped, and to McGrath's astounded senses the figure seemed to be that of a huge bird. He heard the sound of a very human fist striking against a jaw bone. He saw one of the attackers go down to stay.

McGrath gave a yelp of delight, club-

bed his pistol and sailed into the fight himself. Two minutes later a door slammed downstairs. McGrath wiped sweat off his face and turned around.

"I'm grateful, Bat," he said. "Don't think I'm not. Those birds would have polished me off in about one more minute."

"They may do it yet," the Bat whispered. "Dolan, your fingerprint man, is dead. I found his body in one of the bedrooms. We've got to find out what he saw that made his death so necessary. Igoe is unconscious, but he'll live—if they didn't kill him on their way out."

McGrath tried to turn on the light switch in the hall, but there was no response.

"I blew the fuses," the Bat explained. "Stay close to me and I'll lead the way. We'll search the room where Dolan was murdered."

McGrath laughed softly, but there was no mirth in it. "Funny—I'm holding a gun in my hand and I could drill you right through the back if I wanted. For month's I've been waiting for a chance like this and now that it's come, I can't take advantage of it. Let's get going."

DOLAN lay in a crumpled heap on the floor. He has been apparently struck over the head and then stabbed. McGrath knelt beside him and felt in vain for a pulse beat. The Bat stood near an open window. Suddenly he leaned out of it and picked up a small white object from the slanted roof outside. As he drew back, a gun cracked somewhere in the darkness below. The bullet smacked against the window sill and the Bat hastily ducked out of the way.

"They're still down there," he told McGrath, "so if we intend to get out of here, we'll need help. That's rather embarrassing for me because you can't very well get out of putting the cuffs on my wrists if your men appear."

"Never mind that," McGrath grow-

led. "What did you lean out of the window and risk your life for?"

The Bat stepped close to McGrath. "You can't see it, but I hold a single feather in my hand. It's mottled, brown and white. This, McGrath, tells me a complete and interesting story. Now get downstairs and phone. I'll take my chances on running a blockade of police."

"But we don't know why Dolan was killed yet," McGrath protested. "Before a bunch of flatfeet run all over the place, we ought to look for clues."

McGrath felt a firm hand close over one wrist and he was pulled in the direction of the hallway. "I know why, Mac. Those spies may also realize that I guessed their secret and if so, they'll storm this place until both of us are dead. I guarantee that. Get on the phone before they think of cutting the wire."

McGrath allowed the Bat to lead him down the steps. They crossed the reception hall and headed toward a study where there was a phone. Suddenly a barrage of guns let go outside. Voices were raised, and feet pounded on the porch.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Bat Vanishes



RAPIDLY a familiar voice shouted. "Lieutenant, let me in. It's Joe Allen. Quick! There's a small army of killers loose on this estate."

McGrath sprang to the door, unlocked it and Joe Allen came barging into the hall. There were four men with him, all with drawn guns in their hands. McGrath tried to close the door. From the darkness outside came flashes of fire. Someone had a sub-machine gun and was sending a hail of death straight into the hallway.

The Bat, who had drawn away toward the stairs when the shooting began, felt a slug whistle by his head. He dodged to one side and headed for the dining-room door. As he swept through it, three burly forms leaped at him. While the machine-gunner had kept the occupants of the house busy at the front door, other gunmen had broken in at the rear.

McGrath managed to slam the front door shut and throw the latch. He swerved around, saw the three men diving for the Bat and he started shooting. At the same moment the Bat's gun roared. One of the attackers went down on his knees and stayed there a moment before he plunged face forward on the floor.

Another, already launched in a flying dive toward the Bat, couldn't check his rush and although the Bat jumped aside with amazing speed, one of the attacker's arms curled around the Bat's leg. Both of them hit the floor with a thump that shook the house.

The third killer gave a shout of elation, calling upon his cohort to move aside so he could put a bullet into this fantastic creature whose life seemed to be charmed.

Impeded by the darkness, McGrath had to fire blindly. The third killer danced back a few steps, still concentrating his attention on the Bat. He also had difficulty in distinguishing friend from foe. He saw a form arise from the floor. It was a man with what seemed to be wings for arms. The spy deliberately pumped three slugs into the form. It hurled sideward and then collapsed.

McGrath saw and uttered a shout of rage. All his hatred for the Bat was gone now. He charged across the room. The escaping spy seemed to know his way around for he dodged into the kitchen and pushed a chair directly in front of the doorway. McGrath tripped over it to fall heavily, breaking the chair to pieces. He floundered around, regained his feet and staggered on to-

ward the rear door. Two of Allen's men were circling the house. Both had flashlights. He hailed them.

"Lend me one of your lights," McGrath ordered. "Then stand guard at this door. Where's Allen?"

"Looking for the gang of spies," the operative reported. "That's what we're all doing. And the cops are on the way, Lieutenant. I can hear the sirens."

McGrath grunted, snapped on the flash and made his way back into the dining room. He knew what he'd find—the body of the Black Bat. McGrath was positive that he had seen the eerie, winged form of his troublesome enemy arise from the floor only to be pumped full of bullets.

"Whoever he is," McGrath said grimly, "I'll hide him if he isn't dead. I owe him that much."

He slowly turned the ray of the light toward the spot where the Bat had dropped, and then he stared. There was no one there, not even the spy with whom the Bat had been fighting. There was some blood—drops of it leading to an open window. McGrath was certain that window hadn't been open a moment ago. The Bat's body had completely vanished!

BRAKES screeched outside. A veritable horde of uniformed police poured into the house. Joe Allen with five of his men, pushed his way through the crowded hallway to McGrath's side.

"What the devil happened?" he asked. "I had four men posted here on special duty to guard Lockhart's estate. One of 'em phoned that you had insisted on going in. While he talked to me on the phone, he heard shooting so I came down with all the men I had handy."

"I don't know what happened," McGrath growled. "Dolan, one of the men from the fingerprint department was murdered. Igoe, a G-man, was knocked on the head. Better get a doctor for him. Looks like we stumbled into

something big, but so far I have no idea what it was."

"I have," Joe Allen said curtly. "You came here to look for fingerprints. You wanted to compare them with those of the body at the morgue. You needn't bother to look further, Lieutenant. That stiff is not Lockhart. I've thought he was alive all along. He made fools out of all of us, especially me. Throw a dragnet out for him, McGrath. I'll put every one of my men to work finding him, too."

McGrath nodded. "So you checked fingerprints, too, huh? Okay, Joe, I'll take your word for it that Lockhart's body isn't in the morgue. All of you mugs get out of here so I can search the joint? Somebody go down cellar and get the lights going. Send for the coroner and the morgue wagon. We'll sweep this estate from one end to the other. Look for footprints, blood stains, and listen—every one of you—if you find anyone dead, don't touch him, understand? Call me first. That's all."

McGrath turned away. He saw something white on the floor and picked it up. Joe Allen moved away to give him more room, and McGrath straightened with a feather in his hand.

"The Black Bat found this on the roof," he said half-aloud. "He said he knew what it meant, but—wait! He also said the feather he found was white and brown. This one is all white."

Joe Allen examined the feather. "Looks to me as though it might be a pigeon feather. What did the Bat mean by saying he knew what the feather signified?"

McGrath shook his head slowly. "I don't think we'll ever know, Joe. I saw one of those gunmen pump three slugs into him. I even heard the bullets smash into his flesh. There's a pool of blood on the floor where he fell."

"But where is the body?" Allen demanded.

McGrath shrugged. "I always had an idea the Bat worked with someone. His helper must have dragged him

away to prevent us from stripping the mask off his face. Funny, isn't it, Joe, how you set your heart on doing something and then, when it's finished, you wish you'd never thought of it. That's how I feel about the Bat. He led me a merry chase, outwitted me a dozen times, and got me so mad I could have blazed away at him myself. Sure, he committed crimes on which a court would have had to convict him, but just the same the Bat worked on the right side."

JOE ALLEN nodded somberly. "I never had anything against him. Look here, Mac—we're in this thing over our heads. I was paid a fancy fee to protect the members of the Society Americana. I fell down on the job—bad. I wasn't ordered to put my men on duty around this house. I did it of my own accord, hoping I might trap someone. A few hours ago I went through this house with a dozen men helping me. We checked every damned spot where Lockhart might have left his prints.

"We found plenty of 'em, and none tally with the dead man's. Therefore Lockhart's whereabouts is our next move. He's alive. The body in the morgue is a substitute. You send out an alarm for him and so will I. I'm connected with a national organization of private detective agencies. I'll flash each member outfit a full description and put them to work. If I'm to save my own reputation, I've got to uncover the mugs who murdered my clients. Are you with me?"

McGrath silently shook hands with Allen and they left the house together.



CHAPTER XIX

The Bat Strikes



GATHERED in a room in another section of the city thirty men were speaking in whispers. Suddenly someone snapped an order. The men straightened up and extended their right hands in a salute. A

lone figure walked in from the doorway, stood behind a desk and answered the salute.

Then he spoke and every word dripped venom and hate.

"The day has come," he began. "We are prepared to strike and strike hard. The enemies of our Fatherland shall no longer obtain arms, ammunition, airplanes and tanks from the United States. With one blow we shall stop that and simultaneously bring the government of the United States to its knees before us. Eighty places are mined; twenty-one warships, from submarines to capital class battleships, are ready to be sunk.

"Our men, all over the country, stand ready to strike. And luck is with us. The only man whom we feared was the Black Bat. I announce with considerable pleasure that he is now dead. The man who killed him is our own comrade, Schlenk, who will be properly rewarded at the right time."

The leader of the band stopped while his men growled gratified oaths. Then he held up his hand for silence again.

"There are just two more tasks which must be done at once. The arsenal, which all of you know is already mined, is to be blown up to give these fools a taste of our power. Franz, that shall be your glory. Alone, equipped with one of our proton guns, you will ride close to the arsenal. Be sure you are not challenged by any sentries. The place is loaded to the roof

with munitions. It will make a glorious explosion."

The man called Franz stepped out and drew himself erect. He bowed, clicked his heels and wheeled toward the door. Then he was gone on his errand of death and destruction.

The spy leader continued.

"Von Dahlke, you are appointed to handle the other task. There is this Fisk, who may know too much. He is staying at the Hotel Harvey on the eighteenth floor. There is a fire escape by his window. It would not be well if he lived to see the dawn."

Von Dahlke stepped forward and rendered homage. Then he, too, was gone. The spy leader smiled broadly, thrust a cigarette between his thin lips and sat down. His men silently filed out. Before the spy leader's gaze, the further wall became a vivid picture.

He was in the center of it, giving orders, acknowledging the salutes of fools who thought they could outwit him. There would be a few death sentences too—all in good time. Within three hours it would be daylight and such a dawn the United States would never see again. Franz was already nearing the arsenal, the blowing up of which would start the series of terrific explosions.

BUT Franz, as he drove a cheap sedan out of the city, was far from being a brave man. Like all men of his particular character he was stolid and without much imagination, but tonight something seemed definitely wrong. He could almost sense the presence of someone nearby, somebody who meant him no good. He shivered, hunched over the wheel and pushed his foot down on the gas pedal. The sooner this was over with, the better.

Then an arm draped in black suddenly curled around his throat. Another hand grasped the wheel and turned the car off the road into a lane. Franz gurgled, his eyes rolling in terror. In the soft glow of the instrument

panel light he saw a dreaded figure—the black hooded image of the man known as the Black Bat. The spy master had been mistaken. The Black Bat was not dead.

The car stopped with a jolt, but that circling arm remained tight. Franz tried to reach for a gun under his coat, but the black gloved hand beat him to it. Franz made a frantic, squirming wriggle out of that choking embrace. He had the car door open in a flash, grabbed up the square, heavy box that reposed on the seat beside him, and leaped out. He was close enough to the arsenal for the rays of this machine to do their work. Franz began running madly across the uneven pasture land to escape his Nemesis.

But behind him came the Bat—the hugest form Franz had ever seen in his life. Franz didn't know it, but this eerie figure was Butch in the Bat's regalia. The winged cape seemed to render the Bat capable of actual flight for he gained on Franz with an astounding speed. Franz gave a whimpering cry of terror. A huge hand came down to close around his throat. He suddenly discovered that his legs were still running madly, but they kicked through thin air for he was being held aloft. That was too much. Franz screamed and let go of the square box. His eyes glazed and he passed out.

AT approximately this same moment Von Dahlke was crawling across the roof of the Hotel Harvey. He located the fire escape, peered over the edge and then crept down it silently. Locating the room in which Fisk lived was easy.

Von Dahlke found the window open about an inch. He drew a gun, thumbed off the safety and prepared to shoot if his victim was aroused from sleep. As he slipped into the room, he smiled confidently. A man lay beneath the covers of the bed and he seemed to be fast asleep.

Von Dahlke put his gun away, re-

moved a knife from a scabbard under his arm and decided to taunt his victim a bit. The loss of Fisk's island as a secret submarine base had been a serious blow, and Fisk probably had something to do with it. Better to let him know why he was being killed.

Von Dahlke seized the bed covers and yanked them off. At the same time he raised his knife to aim the point at his victim's throat. But somehow the hand gripping the blade became frozen. As the bed clothes came away, a black-clad, black-hooded man suddenly sat up and there was a very businesslike automatic in his fist. This was Tony Quinn, the real Black Bat.

"*Gott im Himmel!*" Von Dahlke screamed. "The Black Bat! But he is dead! It cannot be."

Von Dahlke didn't try to use the knife. He realized just how close he was to death at this moment. At a gesture from the gun he backed toward the wall and raised his shaking arms so high that they ached in their sockets. The black-clad figure swung two very earthly and substantial legs off the bed, arose and calmly stowed the gun into a holster beneath the ribbed cape. Von Dahlke gaped at this action and decided to take a chance. He reached for his gun and actually managed to touch the butt with his fingertips before a terrific right hook slugged him on the point of the jaw. His head was violently thrown back, hit the wall and bobbed forward again only to meet that terrible fist once more. The killer-spy slumped to the floor without a sound.

The Bat hoisted Von Dahlke to one shoulder, peered out of the window and then climbed to the fire escape. He slipped down it, unobserved, threw his limp burden into a car that was parked and ready in the courtyard behind the hotel and drove off.

LIEUTENANT McGRATH left Headquarters long after midnight. He was tired and uneasy. The breaks

had been against him tonight. The death of the Black Bat depressed him more than anything else. He suddenly realized that with the Bat gone, a certain zest was simultaneously gone from his job.

As he walked along the quiet, suburban neighborhood toward his home, McGrath wondered if Tony Quinn would mysteriously vanish, or would Quinn be simply listed as having died a natural death? That is—McGrath puckered his lips thoughtfully—if Tony Quinn was the Bat.

At least McGrath would be sure of that point finally.

Again he visualized the grisly moment when the spy had fired point-blank at the body of the man whose cape was flung out like the wings of a gigantic bird. If the Bat had lived through the impact of those three slugs he was no mortal man, and McGrath didn't believe in ghosts nor in any brand of super-men. The Bat was dead and that was all there was to it.

McGrath swung through the gate and stepped lightly up the path to his front door. Suddenly he stopped as though an invisible wall barred his way. His jaw dropped, his eyes grew round with amazement. There were two men seated on the steps of his front porch.

One rested limply against one banister post, his whole face swollen out of shape. The other lolled against the opposite post. Something had slammed with considerable force against his nose for it was bent in an absurd manner. One eye was completely closed and the other rapidly nearing the same condition. Each man was handcuffed to the porch, and each man wore the image of a bat pasted on his forehead just above the eyes! Franz and Von Dahlke.

Then McGrath took a closer look at the two men. He stepped up to them, opened their coats wide and muttered some rather uncomplimentary terms about his own stupidity. A private de-

tective badge gleamed on the vest of each prisoner.

McGrath rushed into the house, grabbed the phone and called Commissioner Warner. Then he phoned Michael Igoe, learned that the local head of the F.B.I. suffered nothing more than a violent headache which some interesting news would quickly cure.

Without awakening his wife, McGrath extracted a fresh service pistol from a buffet drawer, thrust it into his pocket and took out his bunch of keys as he left the house. Two minutes after he had both men unhooked from the porch, a squad car drove up and the prisoners were thrown into the back of it.

CHAPTER XX

The Image on the Wall



YAWNING, Joe Allen opened the door of his home, rubbed his eyes sleepily and started at the trio who faced him.

"Commissioner Warner! McGrath—and Igoe!" Allen exclaimed, snapping awake. "Come in! What's up?"

"Plenty," Warner said. "We need your help. If necessary, I'll even swear you in as a special officer. How much do you know about the men who belong

to your organization, Allen?"

Allen shrugged. "As much as any employer who keeps about fifty people on his payroll, I guess. Some of the boys aren't the highest type mentally. They're hard-boiled, drink a lot I suppose, and they're always broke. Why?"

"Because two of them are now under arrest charged with being members of this spy ring," Warner grunted. "Let's go inside and have this out. Good heavens, man—you've been in danger every single moment while fighting this bunch of saboteurs."

Joe Allen sank weakly into a chair. He gulped, reached for a cigarette and forgot to light it.

"They haven't admitted their guilt, naturally," Warner went on, "but we did some pretty rapid checking. They live under good American names, but their fingerprints show they are alien Germans, Franz Braun and Josef Von Dahlke, wanted by the Department of Labor for deportation. They have bad records indicating that they have been engaged in espionage work for years."

"Maybe," Allen said finally, reaching for the telephone, "I better do some big checking up. Look, Commissioner, I run my own outfit here, but I'm connected with a nation-wide hookup of other agencies. Some of my boys were transferred from other points and were recommended by these out of town agencies. I'd better get in touch with each manager and have him look into the situation. How about it?"

[Turn Page]

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Warner waved his hand. "Of course. That's why we came—to get your co-operation. You're not going to sit there and phone each one though, are you?"

Allen picked up the telephone and grinned. "No. All I have to do is call the telegraph office. They have a list on hand and they'll dispatch prepared wires to each man telling him to contact me at once. Let them spend the dough for cross-country calls."

Allen dialed the telegraph office. "This," he said, "is Peter Ehrmann. You will dispatch the prepared wires immediately. Thank you."

"Why the phony name?" Lieutenant McGrath asked promptly.

Allen shrugged. "I've had a feeling that I have been observed all through this case. So I used that name to throw any spies off the trail. Now let's plan some method of action. I'm open to any suggestion, gentlemen."

"If only the Bat were here," Warner said slowly. "You know, Allen, I definitely do not believe in ghosts, but if the Bat ever had any spiritual qualities after death, I'm sure he'd be here. Sheer nonsense, of course. I—what's wrong, Allen?"

Allen was crouched far back in his chair. His eyes were bulging, his nostrils flared out and he bared his teeth in a grimace of horror. His cigarette fell to the floor.

Warner, Igoe and McGrath whirled in the direction in which the private detective was staring.

ETCHED against the farther wall, like the work of a clever silhouette artist, was the image of a bat. A huge bat—as though the shadow had been cast through an enlarging lens. Allen suddenly came out of the chair in a beastlike spring. He reached for the pocket of his lounging robe, but as he passed by McGrath, the lieutenant stuck out a foot. Allen tripped over it, fell heavily and McGrath kicked the gun out of his grasp.

"Thank you, Lieutenant," the Bat's voice came from the other end of the room. Curtains fluttered and the Black Bat stepped out. He held a gun, but its muzzle slanted downward.

McGrath gave a grunt of disgust. "I might have known bullets wouldn't hurt you. Here I've been cursing myself for letting you get shot, even praising you in my mind. Well, you saved my life and I'm grateful. How did you save your own?"

The Bat chuckled softly. "The man you saw arise, with the cape over him, was the spy with whom I was fighting. I tried to twist my cape around his neck, but he jerked free and his pal shot him by mistake. I simply dragged the man away to give the impression that I was dead. I figured Joe Allen would begin his work in earnest then."

Commissioner Warner reached down and jerked Allen into a sitting position.

"So it is Allen. I wasn't sure because we had no evidence. If you say so, Bat, it's enough for me."

"He's the spy leader," the Bat said. "And he had one of the most perfect setups for espionage work I've ever seen. His agents were all well Americanized in speech and mannerisms. They were all licensed private detectives who could go almost anywhere under the protection of their badges. He had a nation-wide organization and he communicated with them by means of carrier pigeons. I found evidence in the shape of feathers at Lockhart's home. They were bold enough to use the house of a dead man as a meeting place."

"So Allen dropped the white feather I picked up," said McGrath. "I thought so. Then Lockhart is really dead?"

The Bat nodded. "That is his body at the morgue. To throw everyone off balance Allen had his men wipe away all fingerprints in Lockhart's home and substitute the prints of one of his own men. That same spy left the identical prints in a hideout where I found them. Until a short time ago I was sure that

Lockhart was still alive and very possibly the spy leader. But I began to put things together.

"The case began with the deaths of Sloane and Collier. We know exactly how they were murdered. However, someone inserted those hypodermics into the back of their necks after they were dead. Only two men actually touched the bodies. Lockhart did, when he went to see if they were really dead. Then Joe Allen rushed in and handled the bodies. Now if I could prove that Lockhart really was dead, he certainly could not be the spy leader and that left—Joe Allen."

"How did you find out?" Michael Igoe wanted to know.

"I looked for something which the spies might not have wiped clean of Lockhart's prints. There was a wall safe which they hadn't been able to open. I opened it and found Lockhart's prints on a metal box inside. That convinced me."

Warner swung around to face Allen.

"Well," he asked, "Have you anything to say about all this?"

A LLEN smiled thinly and shrugged. "It's all foolishness. How do you even know that this hooded man really is the Bat? Maybe he's the spy leader giving you a lot of hooley to stall things. I tell you, Commissioner, something big is in the air. This man, in my opinion, is merely holding you all up while his spies get in their dirty work. I'm not responsible if anything happens. Keep that in mind."

There was a soft laugh from the Bat. "If anything happens, Allen, I'll be greatly surprised. This house has been wired ever since I suspected you. I have recordings of your voice giving those spies orders to destroy the arsenal and kill Fisk. That's how they were circumvented and picked up.

"You were going to take care of Hugh Brooks and Durrance, too, like you took care of Fouquet. They were

all dangerous men to your cause, spending vast sums to run down men like you. I needed only one thing tonight—the evidence which would enable me to secure the names and addresses of your far-flung spy organization, those equipped with the proton beam machines which would set off the mined buildings.

"You kindly furnished that when you phoned the telegraph office and gave them your false name. By now they have turned over to the F.B.I. the names and addresses to which those wires would have been sent. Before many hours are up, those men will have visitors they won't enjoy."

Allen slumped even lower in the chair and his eyes gleamed in mad hatred. The Bat looked down at him.

"Collier, Sloane or Rigby somehow gained possession of one of those watches. I suppose they overheard some of your men talking and they got the impression that the watches were being flown around the country by pigeon. I've discovered your true method of shipping them. You simply mailed each of your lieutenants a watch, minus the main spring.

"You told each one simply to lay the watch aside until the main spring arrived. It was to be inserted according to the instructions you furnished. On each main spring, however, was engraved in code the instructions this particular lieutenant was to carry out when *Der Tag* came. Your coded wires, which have just been intercepted, give your lieutenants the key words to break down the code written on the springs.

"In that manner only you knew all of the places that were mined. If your lieutenants stumbled and were captured, they could give no important information because they knew none. The proton machines you use emanate a detonator ray which explodes all munitions and gasoline in its path. It can penetrate walls because it has X-ray qualities.

"This device has not yet been perfected and I hope it never will be. Now its scope cannot be well controlled. That is why, when you went searching for the stolen factory model, you blew up stocks of munitions in hardware stores and supplies of gasoline at fuel stations. Each of your lieutenants was provided with one of these devices, but they will all be in the hands of G-men before tomorrow noon."

McGrath shook his head from side to side. "You get it all, Bat. I suppose Allen's guards, posted at the doorway of the Society Americana, killed Lockhart, bashed in his face and flung him out of the window."

The Bat answered quietly. "That's right. And Allen, looking out of the window, identified the body thirty-two stories below. Quite a feat. When I heard about it I wondered. Fisk went to an island which he owned. Very few people even knew of its existence, but Allen did. Fisk had told him about it, because Fisk believed in Allen. He even phoned him after I warned him not to contact anyone. Under Allen's clever questioning Fisk must have even told him about the watch.

"Therefore Allen murdered the jeweler and arranged Fisk's death. I got him out of his room barely in time. He's all right now. There were several traps set for me and my suspicions were aroused against both Brooks and Durrance, but now I see that some of Allen's men were always in attendance to overhear any remarks.

"Allen even went so far as to leave one of his own men to die in the blaze at Durrance's home. That would have diverted all blame from him. I rescued the man, but unfortunately he was unable to talk at the moment and he was murdered before he could expose Allen. And so—good night, gentlemen."

THE Bat slowly backed away as he spoke. He reached the floor length curtains that draped the farther window. Every eye was upon him. Allen

watched the other three craftily. There were two other sides to this room through which an escape might be made.

Suddenly he came out of the chair and bolted straight toward the west wall. As he neared it, the window drapes there parted and the form of the Bat appeared. Allen gave a shriek of frustration, whirled and sped toward the opposite window. There again, the drapes parted and the Bat appeared, gun leveled. Allen reeled back, gibbering, raging and shaken badly. McGrath started for him. Allen gave a wild yell and charged straight toward the end window through which he had seen the Bat vanish after the exposure. Ten feet from it, Allen slowed up. His knees buckled and he sank to the floor, a beaten, cowering man.

For the Bat stood there, a grim figure of doom. McGrath was wetting his lips and trying to stare in three directions until his head swam. How had the Bat been in three places at once? This got even the good lieutenant.

McGrath clapped handcuffs on Allen's unresisting wrists. Then he growled an oath.

"I'm going to satisfy myself. I think a certain party is the Bat. We'll see!"

He headed for the hall and the phone. Warner checked him, led him aside and whispered.

"Listen, you fool, if it's Quinn you think is the Bat, think again. I happened to be at his house when you phoned earlier. I thought, as you did, that he was the Bat and I went there to see if he was wounded and needed help. He wasn't. He is totally blind. No one can cure him—ever."

"But we're not sure," McGrath protested.

Warner piloted McGrath to the door, led him onto the porch and pointed. There was a taxi parked at the curb, and a street lamp just beyond showed Tony Quinn seated impassively in the tonneau.

"I brought him with me," Warner

said. "Naturally I didn't ask him inside because I figured some fur might fly. If that doesn't satisfy you, speak to the taxi driver. He's an innocent bystander. If Quinn didn't leave the cab, then he can't be the Bat can he?"

McGrath stalked out to the cab, opened the door and looked in at Tony Quinn. Then he turned to the driver.

"You, did your passenger get out of this cab for even a minute?"

fell. McGrath grabbed him, but somehow one of Quinn's hands knocked McGrath's hat off. McGrath sighed dismally, bent down to pick it up and saw Quinn's foot squash it into a battered mass.

The taxi driver jumped out of the car with amazing speed for his huge bulk. He picked up the hat, dusted it off and then stepped behind McGrath. He put the hat on his head, tilted it at the

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The driver turned a puzzled face toward McGrath. "Him? No, sir. We been chewin' the fat here. Somethin' wrong?"

"Why, Lieutenant McGrath," Quinn spoke up. "What's happened? Did you get the man you were after? Here, help me out a moment. I want to know what's going on."

Quinn stepped out of the taxi, seemed to lose his balance and almost

proper angle and stepped back.

"Looks okay, Chief. Wasn't hurt none. You'll have to excuse my fare. He's a blind man."

"Thanks," McGrath declared coldly. "And good night!"

HALF an hour later Quinn was led into his own house by Warner. Silk met them at the door. Quinn shook hands with the Commissioner

and then, as the door closed, he met his valet's eye and both men shook in silent laughter.

"You put it over splendidly, Silk. I never saw McGrath so confused in all my life, and we scared the daylights out of Allen. Butch certainly took the part off well. He's getting rid of the taxi now. Three Black Bats! Can you imagine?"

A girl's voice spoke from the privacy of the library. "One of them is enough for me, Tony Quinn. I ought to be angry—sitting here worrying over whether you'd get away with it."

Tony Quinn forgot that he was a blind man, forgot that his face was

hideously scarred, forgot that a vast spy organization had been shattered into bits. Silk withdrew to the kitchen and started preparing a snack.

Later, in his own section of the city Lieutenant McGrath entered his home for the second time that night. He threw his hat on a table, faced a mirror and started to smooth down what was left of his hair. His jaw fell ludicrously as he started at his own reflection. There was an image of a Bat pasted on his forehead!

He walked over to the table, picked up the hat and suddenly hurled it on the floor. Then he jumped up and down on it.

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CAPTAIN JOHNNY BLAKE of the Broadway Squad barged around the corner in time to see a thin, slinking figure dart into the lobby of Trinity Towers, one of the units of concrete and steel that made up the great city's skyline. It was long after hours, the building was practically deserted, and the man was standing at the self-operated elevator when Blake trotted down the foyer.

He heard Blake's footsteps and whirled around. Then he cowered against the wall, his skinny face gone gray.

"Hello Lomas," Blake said. "Mind telling me how come a rat like you shows his face uptown?"

"Lemme alone, you big mug," "Cutter" Lomas snarled. His furtive eyes saw the elevator stop level with the floor. "I ain't done nuthin'."

"You belong better than twenty blocks downtown," Blake said cheerfully. "You know my orders. Any hood who shows on Broadway gets the bounce. Lift your paws for a frisk,



A gun was shoved into the small of Blake's back

Cutter. Let's see if you're carrying any of those diamond glass cutters you're so fond of."

Cutter Lomas backed away a step, his eyes frantic with fear. Blake decided his hunch was right. A crook like Lomas wouldn't be uptown unless there was an emergency. But for once Blake wasn't fast enough. He was wholly unprepared when Lomas' hand moved quickly and a gun prodded Blake in the stomach. For Lomas was no gunman, no hop-laden crook, no clever, resourceful thief. He was just a small-time mug with a yen for show-cases and show-windows.

"Don't move, Blake," Lomas snarled. He reached behind him, opened the elevator door and slowly stepped into the lift. "You're a right guy, but I gotta do this. If you move, I'll shoot!"

"I think you would." Blake had his arms shoulder high. He knew desperation when he saw it and desperation shone starkly clear in Lomas' beady eyes. "Of course you know what this means. You're a three-timer and the fourth time is out."

Lomas slammed the elevator door and pressed the controls. Blake was left standing in the deserted foyer, a mild look of wonder on his big face.

"Now why would a rat like Cutter Lomas pull a rod on me?" he asked himself. "Usually he hasn't the guts to buck a grasshopper, but he'd have shot if I tried to nail him."

BLAKE watched the floor indicator. The needle hesitated at the fifteenth floor, as though Lomas had punched that button and changed his mind on the way up. It finally came to a stop on the sixteenth floor.

Blake went up the stairs, three at a time. He was hardly winded when he turned into the spacious corridor of the fifteenth floor. There was no sign of Lomas. Every office was dark and there was only one place a man could hide. A pillar, fully six feet in diameter formed one of the lavish deco-

rations of the imposing corridor.

Blake flattened himself against the wall, kept a tight grip on his service pistol and edged his way toward the pillar. But Lomas wasn't lurking behind it. There was a click from the elevator shaft. The automatic lift was going down. Blake took up a position where he could see if anyone emerged from the elevator.

It stopped on the fifteenth floor, the door slid back and a young man emerged. He had a briefcase tucked under one arm and he walked rapidly toward a door labeled:

JAMES STANLEY, ATTORNEY
AT LAW

"Hey—Jim," Blake called softly and the man spun around, startled. Then he made out Blake's features.

"Blake!" he exclaimed happily. "What the hell—"

"Sorry I scared you." Blake grinned. "A pal of mine sneaked up here and I figured one of his friends might be following. Working late, huh?"

Jimmy Stanley shrugged. "Just a little routine work. Been in court all day. Want to come in and talk?"

"Got business." Blake shook his head. "I'll maybe see you later."

He climbed the stairs to the sixteenth floor and found nothing. Then he made a systematic search of every floor. All the offices were dark.

He paid particular attention to the Shoburn Museum of Art, a private gallery on the top floor of the building. A watchman was on duty, but he insisted he had seen no one.

Blake returned to the foyer. Lomas was somewhere in the building, all right, but even a half-wit like he was wouldn't dare pull a job after a detective had spotted him entering the building.

Blake finally went out on the street, walked to the curb and looked up. He could see the solitary light from Stanley's offices. Fifteen stories up, those windows looked like stars. He thrust his hands into his pockets and started for the entrance again. There were

phones in the lobby and he needed a squad to cover the place thoroughly. Lomas wasn't going to get away if Johnny Blake could help it.

Then he heard a crash, a shrill scream and someone on the sidewalk shouted a warning. A man was plunging down! His body turned over and over like some grotesque dummy. He hit the sidewalk with a sinister thud.

Blake went into action. Three gigantic leaps and he was kneeling beside the man. A quick look was enough. Cutter Lomas wasn't hiding in the building any longer. He lay, a huddled mass of broken bones, in front of Blake.

The big detective drew a sharp breath and looked up. Lomas had plunged from the lighted windows of Jim Stanley's offices!

A traffic cop lumbered up and Blake gave him curt orders. He rushed back into the building and as the elevator stopped to let him out at the fifteenth floor, Stanley was frantically pressing the elevator call button.

“WHAT happened?” Blake asked quickly.

“It was awful!” Stanley said, his eyes staring. “He—he came into the office—said he needed advice and before I could say anything he said he felt ill. He asked me to get him a drink of water. When I left the room, he—he jumped.”

“Let's go back in,” Blake said. “That was Cutter Lomas. Or did you know?”

Stanley steeled himself and followed Blake into his offices.

“I knew him. He was a rat—a per-juring doublecrosser. Six months ago he damned near had me disbarred with his confounded lies.”

Blake saw a drawer of Stanley's desk partly open. A nickel-plated revolver gleamed in the reflection of the desk light. He removed it with his handkerchief and sniffed of the muzzle.

“Been doing some hunting?” he asked.

“That gun!” Stanley exclaimed. “Blake—I never saw it before! It's not mine. I can't understand—”

“Stay here,” Blake said. “I'm going down to the street. We'll talk it over after the morgue wagon shows. And—don't worry.”

There was an ambulance at the curb when Blake reached the sidewalk. The surgeon called to him.

“If it's suicide, this guy certainly wanted to die,” the surgeon said. “There's a bullet hole in his stomach. Looks like it was fired at close range. He must have leaned out the window, shot himself and plunged down.”

Blake's jaw dropped. That recently discharged pistol in Stanley's desk! Lomas couldn't possibly have shot himself in the stomach, put the gun in the drawer and rushed to the window.

A big departmental car slid to the curb and Inspector Grogan hopped out. The inspector always reminded Blake of a sparrow he was so slender, and moved around so fast. But Grogan was no flighty bird. He had risen to his rank by hard work and many a man had judged him by his size to that mistaken man's ultimate sorrow.

“Came out of that lighted window up there, eh?” Grogan looked up. “And he's been shot! Blake—what the devil are you standing around here doing nothing for?”

Blake was staring down at the sheet-covered body. One of Lomas' hands stuck out limply. That hand was gloved—and Lomas hadn't been wearing gloves when he entered the building.

“I've already been up,” Blake said. “Jim Stanley has his law offices up there. He—had a gun—”

Grogan moved toward the building entrance. “Come on, Blake,” he said grimly. “I know you like that boy—know all you've done for him, but that doesn't alter circumstances.”

Blake operated the lift, his face creased with worry.

“Listen, Inspector, you got Jim

wrong. He wouldn't plug a guy. Anyway I haven't heard his story yet."

Grogan made a derisive sound and led the way to Stanley's office when they reached the fifteenth floor. Jim Stanley was seated behind his desk, the gun lying on a pile of papers. There was a cold cigarette between his fingers.

"**O**KAY," Grogan snapped. "Let's have the story, Stanley."

"I knew Lomas," Stanley said tensely. "He doublecrossed me, sent an innocent man to prison—my client. Lomas could have alibied him, but he turned rat. I'm telling you this because you'll find it out later. But I didn't kill Cutter Lomas. He came into the office in a hurry, said he felt ill—wanted a drink of water. I went into the next office to get one. Then I—I heard a shot, the window crashed, almost simultaneously with the report. Just before that, Lomas screamed. That's all I know. Blake found the gun in my desk. It's not mine. I don't know where it came from."

"You're under arrest," Grogan said. "The charge is suspicion of homicide. Come on."

Blake stood on the curb watching Grogan's car pull away. His mind slipped back over the years when Jimmy Stanley had been a likeable newsboy, a kid who had fought against his environment and won. Blake's own money had helped put him through law school. And now—he was headed for a cell.

Swearing softly, Blake turned back to the building. There was more to this mess than appeared on the surface. Stanley would have confided in him if he'd killed Lomas and, being a clever attorney, he'd have had a defense ready; not the lame excuses and the improbable story he'd given Grogan. That alone convinced Blake that Jim Stanley wasn't lying.

Blake entered the foyer slowly. The hum of the elevator startled him. He

watched the indicator. It stopped on the fifteenth floor.

Bringing the lift down again, Blake entered it himself and got out on the fifteenth floor with his gun in his fist. There was no one in sight and only young Stanley's offices were illuminated.

Blake moved softly toward them, finger tight against the trigger. He tried each door gently as he passed. All were locked. If anyone was on this floor, he had to be in Stanley's office.

Opening the door quietly Blake moved in, ready to shoot. Nothing happened. A careful search of the offices revealed no one hiding. Captain Johnny Blake sat down, shoved his hat to the back of his head and pondered. Who had shot Cutter Lomas? Why was he wearing gloves when he plunged headlong out of that window, and above all, why did he jump? Lomas was no man to greet death, rather than face prison.

Then Blake suddenly arose. Someone was walking on tiptoe along the corridor outside, but the marble floor picked up and amplified the slight sound. A man was half running toward the elevator shaft when Blake dived into the corridor. He was small, seemed well dressed and moved as if in frantic fear.

"Hold it!" Blake yelled. "You're covered."

The man turned in a flash. His right hand had been held stiffly in front of him and it clutched a gun. The weapon blazed. A bullet struck the marble wall beside Blake and ricocheted wildly. Blake's service pistol boomed. The fleeing man stopped in his running dive for the elevator. He seemed to hesitate, wavered a moment, but Blake knew those signs. Slowly the man sank to his knees, let his gun drop to the floor and collapsed in a heap. The shots echoing through the hollow corridors were succeeded by a tense silence.

BLAKE was kneeling beside him when the lights went out. Instantly the police officer straightened up and reached for his flashlight.

There was a rushing sound, two brawny arms wrapped themselves around Blake's legs and he nose-dived to the marble floor. He struggled desperately, but someone gripped him by the collar, raised his head and banged it hard against the floor. Blake passed out!

When he recovered, the corridor was lighted. Two feet away lay the man he had shot and the smell of cordite still hung heavily in the air. Stumbling to his feet, Blake reeled toward Stanley's office and to the phone. Then he sat down to nurse his aching head and his outraged nerves.

Inspector Grogan came five minutes after the first radio car. He listened quietly to Blake's statement.

"I came up to lock the offices," the police captain recounted. "I heard this man running down the hall. He wouldn't stop and he opened fire on me, so I let him have it. That's all, Inspector. I haven't the slightest idea where he came from or who he is."

Grogan looked at the corpse and sighed.

"I have. That man happens to be Rex Toggart, millionaire art collector. It's odd that a man of his type would start shooting—even carry a rod. But I don't understand this business of the lights going on and off and a couple of men attacking you.

I figured you could handle yourself in any fracas."

Blake grinned ruefully and rubbed the lump on the back of his head. Grogan knelt to make an examination of the body.

"So did I," Blake said. "But they worked fast—and in the dark. I didn't have a chance to—"

"Blake!" Grogan's voice was sharp. He slowly arose. "Toggart has no gun. Are you positive he opened fire on you?"

"Positive?" Blake blurted. "Of course I am. There should be a slug in the corridor. Say—Those two bozos who knocked me out must have taken the gun."

"And the slug too?" Grogan asked doubtfully. "There isn't any place where it could roll and remain out of sight. The doors are all metal, the walls marble. A bullet wouldn't necessarily even leave a mark that could be identified as such. And Toggart was an important man—not one to engage in a gun battle with a policeman."

A horde of reporters descended on the scene. Photographers flashed their bulbs, questions were shot at the two policemen. Inspector Grogan answered them all.

"Captain Blake is not under arrest—yet. You can say he voluntarily came to Headquarters for questioning. Yes, he said Toggart opened fire first, but there is no gun to prove that statement. The whole setup looks fishy.

[Turn Page]



Blake—come along.”

Blake rode in silence beside the inspector. It occurred to him that his own position was almost as bad as young Stanley's. Where had those men come from in the darkness of that corridor? What was their object and why was Toggart in the building in the middle of the night? Nothing made sense except the cold fact that he was practically under arrest.

INSPECTOR GROGAN leaned forward and tapped on the window separating the tonneau from the driver. The car slid to the curb.

“All right, Blake,” Grogan said quietly. “You get out here—and good luck.”

Blake stared. Grogan laughed.

“Thought I meant it, eh? I'm glad, because that's the way I wanted it to sound. Look here, Blake, you and I are old friends. We rose from the ranks together. Do you think I disbelieved your story? If you say Toggart opened fire on you, I'd believe it even if Toggart didn't have any hands. There's something radically wrong in that skyscraper. It's my hunch that someone listened and I wanted to give them the idea that the coast was clear. Go back—work as you please, but bring in the men who attacked you and find out what happened to Toggart's gun. The newspapers won't help your reputation much until they repudiate what they'll print, but a cop must take things in his stride. Good hunting.”

The car slipped into the traffic and Blake stood on the curb, still amazed at the sudden turn of events. Then he went into action. Toggart's address was easy to determine from a phone book. He hailed a cab and paid off the driver a block from the millionaire's elaborate residence.

No lights blazed in the home of the dead man, and Blake remembered that he was a cantankerous old bachelor, interested only in his art treasures.

He walked boldly up the winding, heavily shrub-bordered walk to the front door. It was so dark that he didn't see the form that lay just off the path until his foot kicked it.

Blake hurriedly masked his flashlight with the palm of his hand, letting only a slender ray of light emanate from between his fingers. The dead man over whom the police officer had stumbled wore a brown uniform and an empty holster at his hip proved to Blake's satisfaction that he was a private patrolman. A bullet through the back of the head had killed him.

Creeping forward until he reached the front porch, Blake pressed an ear against the door, but heard no sound. Carefully he tried the heavy brass latch. The door swung wide under the pressure of his shoulder. He stepped into a dark hall and held his breath. There was an unnatural, sinister quiet about the house.

Something crashed heavily against the floor deep within and a hoarse groan arose weirdly. Blake cast caution to the winds. Using his flash he barged down the hall, through a door and across a big study. In the adjoining sitting room he found a chair overturned, but nothing else.

Footsteps, loud and clear, came from the front porch. Blake reversed his course. Two men were peering through the open front door. One wore a tuxedo, the other the livery of a servant.

“Don't move!” Blake growled. “I'm the law.”

He came closer and snapped on the hall light. The man in the tuxedo was middle-aged and had piercing eyes.

“What's going on here?” he asked.

“Murder,” Blake said tartly. “Stay where you are, both of you. I'm going to search the house and if anybody comes out, stop him.”

TWENTY minutes later Blake sat dejectedly in one of the deep leather chairs in Toggart's study. The

man in the tuxedo paced the floor in front of him.

"I'm Paul Dillard," he was saying. "I live next door. Brady—my man here—thought he heard a shot so we came over to investigate. The dead man is Toggart's watchman. I can't understand Toggart's absence. He rarely leaves the house."

"He won't be back," Blake said dully. "He's dead."

"Dead!" Dillard gasped. "Are you sure?"

Blake scowled. "I ought to be. I killed him. Look here, Dillard, there must be someone who knows about Toggart's affairs. I want to find out what's missing."

Dillard frowned thoughtfully. "There's a secretary, but I don't know where he's gone. He lives here—has the evenings off. What about Toggart? Why in the world did you kill him?"

"Had to. Give me that phone. I've got to call Headquarters and get a morgue wagon and the coroner. Be cheaper for the city if they tagged along after me. Death is just my little playmate tonight."

Dillard handed Blake the phone and listened while he called Inspector Grogan. When he hung up, Dillard asked more questions.

"Read about it in the papers," Blake said irritably. "Toggart was killed in the Trinity Towers."

"Trinity Towers?" Dillard cried. "Was there a robbery? Did anything happen?"

"Don't know. Why?"

"Because I'm manager of that building and I own the museum on the top floor. It's filled with priceless treasures. Captain Blake, if anything happened to my art objects, I'm going to hold you personally responsible!"

"Relax," Blake groaned. "You'll hear about it when Inspector Grogan gets here—and how you'll hear about it."

When the inspector did come in,

there was a frown on his face. "Captain," he said coldly to Blake, "I didn't believe it possible. This time you'll be handcuffed. When you broke away from me, I could have shot you. It now appears I should have. You're suspended—busted, get me? Soon as I clean up this mess here, you'll go to a cell where you can't open a door and dodge into traffic."

This time Grogan sounded as though he meant it. The bunk about his breaking away was only to cover up Grogan's gift of freedom that had led to more murder. Grogan asked questions, located the secretary of the dead millionaire, and when the man arrived he kept close to Blake while the secretary searched the house.

"I can't understand it," the secretary reported. "There isn't a thing missing. It looks to me as though the safe in Mr. Toggart's bedroom had been opened, but the currency in it is untouched. Mr. Toggart may have left the safe open, although he wasn't careless. It's beyond me."

"None of his art doodads are missing?" Blake asked.

"Not one," the secretary said. "And there are thousands of dollars worth. For instance, a Rembrandt hangs in the dining room. It's still there. I made certain of that first."

"All right," Grogan said. "We're going, Blake. And no fast moves or I'll cuff you."

CAPTAIN BLAKE walked out to the inspector's car and climbed in. Paul Dillard talked briefly to Grogan and then hurried back to his own house. Grogan sank into the car cushions beside Blake.

"Well," he snapped, "it looks as though letting you loose becomes a bait for murder. What the devil is it all about?"

"If I only knew!" Blake groaned. "The more I go into this case, the worse it gets—for me. Say, you don't really think I went and plugged that

watchman, do you?"

"Hell, no," Grogan said. "I can see what happened. Toggart's home was visited by a bunch of crooks. They killed the watchman, but you surprised them. While you searched part of the house, they slipped out, probably just missing Dillard—which was mighty good for his health. Blake, I'm surprised at you. The commander of the Broadway Squad should have cleared this affair up long ago."

"I can't even keep up with it," Blake said, and sighed. "And now I suppose you mean business. Not that I blame you. If I could only prove Toggart had a gun, it wouldn't be so bad—"

"We'll both prove it—if it can be done," Grogan said. "We're going back to the Trinity Towers. You're a fool, Blake. You need my help. Anyway I've been getting stale lately—warming a chair in my office. Putting on weight too. I'm a hundred and thirty."

"Sparrow," Blake grunted. "A hun-

dred and thirty! A swell impression you'd make going through a door."

"But smart," The inspector grinned. "Did it ever occur to your lame brain that there might be a strong reason for my believing in you? For tying all this killing up with one crime?"

"No," Blake said quickly. "Is there something in the wind?"

"That's the trouble with cops assigned to special jobs like you," Grogan snorted. "You don't pay attention to details. In the last month three other punks like Cutter Lomas have been found dead. It looked like suicide in each case, but you know damned well mugs like that don't take a simple way out. They haven't the guts."

"However, each of these dead men was a specialist in his own line. Like Cutter, who could carve a hole in a showcase without disturbing a single alarm. Well, just before each man died, there was a break. Important breaks that never did get much pub-

(Continued on Page 108)

When
a girl
needs
help

UPSET STOMACH - ONIONS

TOBACCO

DENTAL DECAY - LIQUOR

SEN-SEN
FOR THE BREATH

5c

THROAT EASE
VALUABLE TO
SINGERS AND SPEAKERS

DON'T OFFEND...USE SEN-SEN

BREATH SWEETENER... DELIGHTFUL CONFECTION

T-Man Taylor Takes a Plane and Knocks a Spy Plot for a Loop!

When he next opened his eyes he found the pretty hostess bending over him

SUCKERS FLY HIGH

By ROBERT SIDNEY BOWEN

Author of "Aces Don't Cry," "Flight to Glory," etc.

BRADDOCK, head of the New York office of the Treasury Department, sealed the fat envelope, gave it a pat with his hand and sighed with relief.

"Signed and sealed," he grunted pushing up onto his feet, "and now to deliver it."

Going out of his office he strode down the hall and entered a smaller office at the far end. A good looking younger man seated at one of the two desks in the office swung around at Braddock's entrance and got to his feet.

"I was just coming in to ask if I could have a moment of your time, sir," he said.

"Where's Spaulding?" Braddock demanded.

"He phoned in about an hour ago," the young man said. "Told me he wouldn't report back tonight as he is on something important. I've just been waiting around to see you, sir, if I could?"

Braddock seemed not to hear what the youth said. He scowled down at the fat envelope in his hands, muttered something under his breath and then raised his eyes.

"Come into my office, Taylor," he said and abruptly swung on his heel.

Once they were inside Braddock got right down to business.

"You're getting the break I suppose you've been hoping for, Taylor," he said. Then tapping the envelope on the desk. "This is the complete report on the Alston Arsenal sabotage case. Facts, figures, and the whole dope, ready to be delivered to the chief in Washington. He will turn it over to the State Department, and they'll be able to make a certain foreign ambassador and his staff lose plenty of sleep and sweat blood."

Braddock paused for a moment to let his words sink in.

"Washington wants this immediately," he continued, "it's that important. I had planned for Spaulding to deliver it in person, but that's out now. I can't do it myself because I've got to stick here in case Spaulding phones in. He's on another case of equal importance. And so you are elected, Taylor. You'll take the midnight plane to Washington. You can just make it. Here's cash for expenses. Report at once to the chief, and then phone me. Got that clear?"

"Yes sir," Bill Taylor said.

"Good." Braddock nodded and then tapped the envelope again. "Two solid weeks of night and day work, Taylor, during which time we lost one of our best men. Certain parties would sell their souls, and stop at nothing to destroy the contents of this envelope. Be on your guard and take no chances. I'm counting on you. Now, if you can make it quick, what did you want to see me about?"

Taylor pocketed the envelope and stood up.

"It can wait, sir," he said. "You'll get my call from Washington. And thanks for the assignment, sir."

When Taylor had left Braddock tried to return to the pile of work on his desk, but it was impossible to clear his mind of thoughts of that fat envelope. A dozen times he raised his grey eyes and stared at the door through which Taylor had passed. And each time he cursed himself for his jitteriness. It

was plain stupid of him to feel this way. Many times in the past one or more of his men had been out on mighty important assignments and he'd been able to carry on with his end unruffled.

But this time he couldn't keep his mind clear. It was as though he had made a great mistake. Rather, there was something undone that should have been done. A sort of inner warning of alarm filled him. Crazy and absurd, to be sure, but—

HE suddenly cut short his thoughts and stiffened in the chair. His gaze wandering more or less unseeing about the room had come to rest on a huge picture of George Washington hanging on the wall directly opposite his desk. He had looked at that picture ten million times at least, but as he looked at it now there seemed to be something funny about it. A difference that had never been there before.

Then it came to him. The picture was hanging a hair crooked to the right and the top part seemed to sag forward a bit more. And then he noticed that the right wire fastened to the ceiling moulding clamp was a solid strand while the left wire appeared to be braided.

Instantly he got up, pulled a chair over to the picture and stood up on it. And then his eyes popped and he caught his breath in a rasping gasp. The left wire looked braided because a fine wire had been tightly wound about the original wire. And at the hook-eye the second wire ran in back of the huge portrait.

Heart in his throat Braddock pulled one side of the picture away from the wall and looked in back. And when he did his heart seemed to explode in his throat because stuck to the back of the picture was a dictograph mike no bigger than a silver dollar.

A dictograph in *his* office! The realization practically knocked Braddock off the chair. With a howling curse he followed the wire up to the moulding

clamp. There it ran along the moulding so that it couldn't be seen from the floor of the office.

At the row of windows on the south side the fine wire followed down the crack between the frame and the plaster wall and passed outside through a tiny hole bored under the sill. Jerking up the window Braddock reached out, groped for the wire, found it and pulled. The wire seemed to catch three windows down but presently came loose in his hands.

For a split-second he stood trembling with rage, then he whirled over to the phone and snatched it up.

"Newark Airport, quick!" he barked.

But as his eyes fell on the clock on his desk he groaned and jiggled the hook.

"Cancel Newark!" he snapped. "Get me the Air Corps commander at Mitchell Field!"

When Bill Taylor left Braddock's office he was walking on air, and for two very good reasons.

"A real assignment," he murmured aloud. "And to make it on the midnight from Newark. Hot dog!"

On the street he flagged a cab, gave the driver his instructions and told him not to spare the horses. The cab still hadn't reached the turn-off for the Holland Tunnel when instinct, perhaps, caused Taylor to turn around and look back. A second car was a block or so behind and its speed was neither a mile faster nor a mile slower than Taylor's cab.

Just to make sure Taylor had his driver turn up a few blocks. Three minutes later he knew for sure that the other car was tailing him.

For a second panic gripped him and his hands went to the fat envelope in his inside jacket pocket. Then he got control of his nerves and thought fast. He leaned forward toward the driver.

"Turn up the next block and stop at the first drug store," he ordered.

Fate was kind. There was an all night drugstore at the far end of the

block. Telling the driver to wait Taylor leaped out and went into the drugstore and into the first telephone booth. He made a call that lasted a couple of minutes. Then he made a couple of purchases from the sleepy clerk. And then out to the cab he went. A quick glance down the street showed a car without lights a couple of blocks away.

"Now really give it the gas!" Taylor ordered and braced himself on the seat.

THE driver knew his stuff and delivered his passenger at the Newark terminal a good ten minutes before plane time. Buying his ticket Taylor sauntered over to a corner in the waiting room and gave his fellow passengers a thorough once-over. And he paid particular attention to a small but well-built man who bought a ticket a couple of seconds before the "All-Aboard!"

A man from the car that had been following him? Taylor was unable to answer the question. Nor was he able to answer the question—why hadn't he been jumped when he entered the drugstore? But he could make a guess as to that. Whoever was tailing him was planning something not so crude as an attack with a drug clerk and a taxi driver ready to lend a hand to his victim.

And then as Taylor bought an early edition of the morning paper and stuck it in his top-coat pocket another thought came to him. Was Braddock taking no chances? Had he put somebody else on his tail just to make sure?

A bit piqued by that possibility he boarded the transport, grinned at the trim looking hostess and took the window seat of two on the port side and just in front of her nook. His wondering and annoyance increased when the small man entered the cabin and took a seat directly across the aisle.

Five minutes later the pilot gunned the powerful engines to maximum revs and the big transport thundered down the billiard table smooth runway and

soared up into the night sky. Once they had left Newark the cabin lights were dimmed so that the passengers could enjoy the star spotted panorama that rushed past underneath, or the beauty of real stars rushing past overhead.

Taylor, however, paid no attention to either. He gave his jacket a reassuring pat, then leaned down to tie his shoelace. Presently when the lights of Newark were way behind the cabin lights were flashed on again. Like several other passengers Taylor buried himself in his paper but kept a weather eye on the small man across the aisle. That gentleman buried himself in his own paper and not once cast a sidelong glance at Taylor insofar as the young T-man could tell.

However, when the plane had passed Philadelphia the small man put away his paper, made a face and put both hands to his stomach. For the next five minutes he struggled with evident oncoming airsickness and then when the hostess went forward in answer to some kind of summons from the pilot he eased up out of his seat and lurched aft. Taylor grinned sympathetically as he passed but the man was obviously too occupied to appreciate the sympathy or be annoyed by it.

Then a couple of seconds later, it happened, and happened so fast that Taylor was, figuratively speaking, caught flat footed. There was the hiss of a blown fuse and every light in the cabin went out.

A split-second after the cabin was plunged into darkness Taylor streaked his hand to the small but effective automatic in his pocket, half turned and pressed back against the window. But he might just as well have stayed right where he was. There was soft swishing sound, and Taylor had the cockeyed crazy sensation that one of the outboard prop blades had let go and come through his window to bury itself in his head.

With a terrific effort he struggled to

beat back the wave of singing oblivion that surged over him. In an abstract sort of way he knew that he was trying to swing his gun around, and smash out with his other fist. He even had the sensation of clutching cloth with his hand. Then something else fell down on his head again and he went sailing off into blissful silence.

WHEN he next opened his eyes he found the pretty hostess bending over him. Worry and fear and a million questions were in her eyes. The fog in his brain cleared instantly. Ignoring her he darted his gaze across the aisle. The small man was back in his seat holding his stomach and looking very sick. The lights were on again.

"Are you all right?" the hostess asked.

"Fine," Taylor said. "Don't worry. Turned too quickly when that fuse blew and cracked my head on the window. Notice how it happened?"

"No," the hostess said and looked at him intently. "But it's okay, now. Can't I get you something? You've got a bad lump there on your head."

"My own fault," Taylor grinned. "No thanks, I'm okay now."

The hostess hesitated, her eyes worried, then reluctantly went back to her nook. Taylor glanced at his watch. He had been out almost twenty minutes. Then without appearing to do so he pressed his hand against his pocket, and felt no bulge of a fat envelope.

Heart pounding he leaned forward slightly and glanced down at the floor. A thin grin tugged at his lips. Then he sat up in the seat just as the engines were throttled and the huge plane started down toward a landing on the Washington Airport.

Taylor waited until the craft had been taxied over to the embarking platform. Then taking his top coat off the hook and throwing it over his arm he moved quickly over to the cabin door.

"Sorry, ladies and gentlemen," he said, and flashed his Treasury Department shield, "but I must detain you all for a few minutes. There has been a little accident, and I'm taking the authority of making an investigation. Now—"

Taylor paused as a military plane came taxiing furiously along side the transport. He saw Braddock leap out of the rear cockpit and come tearing over. As soon as the steps were in place Braddock jerked open the transport's door and leaped inside. He made a wild grab for Taylor.

"Taylor!" he barked. "Anything happened? Have you—"

"Everything under control, sir," Taylor grinned. "I just want to identify a sucker, if you don't mind, sir?"

Without waiting to find out whether his superior minded or not, Taylor swung sharply toward the small man.

"Neat, but you forgot to touch second, mister," he said in a brittle voice. "You followed me onto the plane, faked airsickness, and you did fool me for a moment there when you went aft and rammed a knife or some piece of metal into the main fuse socket. That put the lights out. Then you belted me and relieved me of a sealed envelope in my pocket. Yes, it was neat."

"This is outrageous!" the small man cried. "Are you crazy? I did nothing of the sort. Steal something from you? I demand that I be searched! I was in the men's nook when the lights went out. I demand that I be searched!"

"You won't be," Taylor said, "because we wouldn't find anything. What you took, you tore up and disposed of in the wash room. But what you don't know is that—"

"I won't stand for this!" the man cried.

"Then sit down!" Taylor cracked and gave the man a shove that seated him hard and fast. "Not guilty, eh? Take a look at the floor under my seat! Take a look, mister. What do you see?"

(Continued on Page 106)

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(Continued from Page 105)

As the other's eyes flew to the floor under Taylor's seat, the young T-man suddenly reached down and lifted up the man's feet so that the soles of his shoes were visible to everybody. Then Taylor turned to Braddock.

"As you can see, sir," he said, "there are half a dozen thumb tacks on the floor under my seat, and there are two thumb tacks in this man's left sole. They couldn't possibly have got there unless he stepped past the empty seat next to mine to smack me and get that envelope."

Braddock just stared for a moment. Then he moved quickly but not quick enough. The small man had moved with the speed of light. In a flash of motion he came up off the seat, butted Braddock in the stomach and dived for the door.

He almost made it save for one thing. That one thing was Taylor's clenched right fist. It came up with more power than Joe Louis ever dreamed of and exploded on the man's chin. He dropped like a log and hung half in and half out of the cabin doorway. Taylor gulped and wiped a hand across his face.

"Boy!" he breathed more to himself. "What a jam if there hadn't been thumbtacks in his shoes. But I knew damn well he was the one. He just had to be."

"My God, Taylor," Braddock's voice cut in on him, "where is—"

"Safe, sir," Taylor said. "But first hadn't we better have him locked up? Maybe you can get him to talk."

Braddock had the unconscious man taken away, and the plane cabin emptied. Then he faced Taylor and held out his hand.

"I'll take it now!" he said sharply. "You have got it haven't you?"

Taylor paused long enough to grin at the hostess who was still in her nook, then taking the early edition of the morning paper from the pocket of his topcoat slung over his arm he opened

it up. Nestled between the theatre reviews and sports page was the fat envelope. Gravely he handed it to his superior.

"Some one tailed me from your office, sir," he said, "and as you ordered, I didn't take chances. But how the devil any spy knew that I carried this, I can't figure."

"I can," Braddock grunted. "But never mind that. Go on."

"Well," Taylor said, "I stopped at a drug store and made a phone call to Miss Lane, the hostess of this ship. That young lady right there. Then I bought some thumbtacks, paper, and an envelope the same size as that one you have. At the port I bought a paper. I stuck the dummy envelope in my pocket and the real one in the pages of the paper. I figured that if anything did happen—I mean an attack on me aboard the plane, that the fake envelope would be found easily and taken. It would be destroyed at once, the thief not wanting to risk a search in case he hurt me bad."

"Hurt you bad?" Braddock growled. "He might have killed you! And nobody would know that the real envelope was—"

"But they would, sir," Taylor interrupted. "That's why I called Miss Lane. In case I was killed she was to take my topcoat to the chief, here in Washington, and then notify you. The thumbtacks I spread on the floor by my feet in case I was just knocked out. Anybody hitting me would have to step past the empty seat next to the one I was in, and they couldn't help but step on those tacks."

"You see, I wanted to nail him in case I wasn't hurt too bad. Of course there was a chance that he'd examine the fake envelope, but that didn't happen. He tore it up while the lights were still out and destroyed the pieces where no one would see him, in the washroom. After all, his one aim was to destroy what I carried. And confident that he had it he didn't bother to

(Continued on Page 108)

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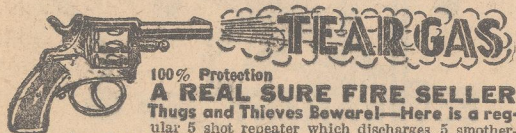
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(Continued from Page 107)

check. So—"

"So you were damn lucky!" Braddock cut in. "But it was a foolish and risky arrangement. This hostess is probably a very fine young lady but with a war on in Europe men in our kind of job can't trust a stranger."

"But she isn't, sir!" Taylor cried and beckoned the hostess from her nook. "We are—I mean, Betty and I are going to get married. That's what I wanted to see you about in the office tonight. I wanted to know if I could have a couple of days leave. Then you gave me this assignment, and—well, I might just as well have distrusted myself, sir, if you get what I mean?"

Braddock looked at them, wiped the sternness from his face and chuckled.

"I do," he said. "But you get no two days leave. Two weeks! One week for a neat job, Taylor. And the other week for what she would have done—but didn't have to, thank God!"

MURDER AT HIS HEELS

(Continued from Page 100)

licity. Certain treasures were gone—like a gold cup a bunch of knights chased all over Europe for a couple of hundred years, or a picture I wouldn't give a dime for. But men like Toggart would mortgage their shirts to get them. Now does it make sense?"

Blake leaned forward and shouted to the driver for more speed.

"Does it make sense?" he growled. "It adds up as nice as two and two. And don't forget, young Stanley isn't in on this business. That kid is okay."

"Maybe," Grogan said noncommittally. "Me, I don't like lawyers much. Anyway here we are. Now to get in without being spotted."

They got out of the car, hastily crossed the sidewalk and kept to the shadows of the building line until they slipped into the foyer of the big structure.

"We'll walk," the inspector said.

"The exercise will do me good. And no noise."

"Wait," Blake said. "I'm thinking."

GROGAN snorted and started up the steps, but Blake's big hand reached out and grabbed him.

"No kidding, Inspector. If there's somebody hidden in this building, there's a way to find out. They've got to have lights at this time of night."

"It's an idea," Grogan agreed, "but first let's see if any offices are occupied. You start here and I'll work my way down from the top floor."

For forty minutes they searched furiously until both were certain that none of the offices were occupied. They met on the ninth floor and walked to the fifteenth.

"Hey, Grogan," Blake whispered, "what about the watchman they keep in the museum? Won't he give an alarm?"

"Not him. He sassed me back, so he's sleeping off a bang on the head. When he wakes up, he'll wonder how cuffs came to be draped around his wrists and his mouth gagged. You got me wrong, Blake. Just because I'm assigned to office work doesn't mean I've gone soft."

Blake pointed toward the huge pillar at the far end of the fifteenth floor corridor.

"Look at it, Grogan," he whispered. "That damned thing cost plenty—and have you thought it might be used for something except for an ornament? You could put half a dozen guys inside it. This is where Lomas vanished when I trailed him. And this is where Toggart came from. It has to be. All we got to do is get inside."

Grogan made a sour face. "And before we walk up those two million and thirty steps inside—if there are any—they'd be in Timbuktu."

"Not if you went down to the cellar and pulled the switches," Blake said happily. "I'll stick and grab anybody who comes out."

(Continued on Page 110)

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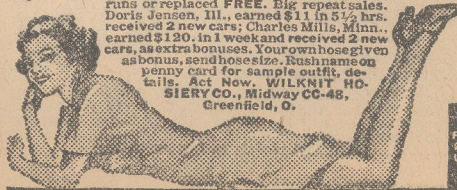
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(Continued from Page 109)

He checked his watch with Grogan's. "It's three nineteen. In ten minutes on the dot you douse the lights and I'll be ready for trouble."

Grogan said something under his breath, but he went. Blake tiptoed toward the huge pillar, crouched and waited for the zero hour. The lights went out promptly on schedule.

He heard a distinct metallic click. A portion of the huge pillar rolled back and someone stepped out. Blake moved in quietly, his clubbed pistol held high. One hand darted out and held the rolling door open while the other brought the gun down hard.

Only a slight moan escaped the man he slugged. Dragging the unconscious form halfway into the pillar Blake left him lying there so he'd keep the door open. Then Blake stepped in.

His left hand held the flashlight, his right gripped his gun. He grunted as he saw a narrow, winding steel staircase going upward. He climbed it slowly, senses alert for any trap.

"Hey, Buck," someone whispered, "why the hell didn't you fix the lights?"

Blake grunted unintelligibly and kept on climbing. He shut off the flash to keep from making a target of himself and his progress became tortuously slow. Then his feet found no more steel steps. He was on some kind of a small landing. A cigarette glowed in the darkness.

SWIFTLY Blake snapped on his light. Its ray revealed three men blinking in the unexpected brilliancy. For a split second they were paralyzed with surprise. Then one of them made a grab for a hip-holstered gun. Blake shot him through the throat.

"And you others can get the same," he warned grimly. "Move back and keep your paws where I can see them."

The two obeyed. Blake stepped across the body of the man he'd shot. He found himself in a small, square room with walls of steel. Suddenly

he knew exactly where he was, but his elation cut off abruptly. A gun was shoved into the small of his back.

"Drop the gun, Blake!"

Slowly Blake let his service pistol fall to the floor and swore softly at the fool he'd made of himself. Someone had trailed him up those steel steps; someone who knew him!

"Over against the wall," the gunman ordered. Blake obeyed, turned slowly and suddenly raised his flashlight until the ray struck the gunman.

Paul Dillard, the manager of Trinity Towers, closed his eyes involuntarily. Blake lunged, but Dillard's men acted just as swiftly. A gun barked. Blake's left hand felt like a lump of inert lead. The flash clattered to the floor. One of the men scooped it up and now Blake had to close his eyes as the ray blinded him.

Dillard moved closer. "We'll get this over with fast," he snarled. "Blake, you're an ass! So is your precious superior, Inspector Grogan. I'm sorry he isn't here so I could kill him too. . . . Stand back, boys. I'm going to riddle this cop. It's a damned lucky thing I came down here."

Dillard squinted behind the sights of his gun while a malicious grin crossed his face. Blake tensed his muscles for a spring straight into the face of the gun.

There was a terrific explosion. Blake staggered back, recovered himself and realized he hadn't been hit. Another gun blazed and someone cursed fluently in mellow Irish tones.

Blake laughed exultantly and charged. He hit Dillard, pinned him to the floor and knocked him cold.

"Grogan!" Blake yelled. "Grab those two hoods!"

He was lunging forward as he yelled, to send one of the crooks crashing to the floor. The second one made a dive toward the door. Blake heard a thump and a quiet laugh. Grogan was lowering his inverted revolver. At his feet the last crook

(Continued on Page 112)



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(Continued from Page 111)

sprawled unconscious.

"I'm getting good at this," Grogan said drily. "Well, Blake, what are you standing there for? Search these men and tie them up. What the hell do you think this is—a picnic?"

SUDDENLY the lights winked on. "Who turned them on?" Blake yelled.

"A cop named Mulcahy," Grogan said, and laughed. "Did you think I wanted to hike up and down those steps again? I brought him in from outside and told him to give me ten minutes before he turned the switches on. Now let's see what prize packages we've got. So Dillard is our man! I thought so."

"So did I." Blake cuffed the unconscious crooks. "Right from the moment you told me about those museum breaks. Remember how Cutter Lomas wore gloves when we found him? That meant he was handling something he didn't want to leave his prints on. Whatever it was, he had it on him when I trailed him into the building."

"A mental wizard." Grogan was applying a handkerchief to his ear. It was soaked with blood. "One of those rats shot first and took a piece out of my ear. I hope it was the fellow I socked, because I didn't pull my punch. He won't wake up for an hour."

"And Dillard was behind it," Blake went on. "When this building was constructed, he had this hidden passage from the fifteenth floor to the eighteenth constructed. It led right into the vault of his museum. That's where we are now. Dillard used that museum to draw suckers. Art lovers came to look. When Dillard got through talking to them, they agreed to pay fancy sums for certain art treasures no crook could have disposed of in any other way."

"That's why museums were robbed. Men like Toggart, who didn't give a

damn how they got their precious art objects, made Dillard rich. He hired crooks to get the stuff and killed them as a reward. Cutter Lomas delivered the goods, but Cutter was suspicious and tried to get away.

"He reached Stanley's office and went in, hoping he'd escape. But he didn't. Dillard waited until Stanley went into the next room. Then he came in. Lomas probably backed to the window. Dillard plugged him and pushed him through. Then he dropped the roscoe in an open drawer."

Grogan sat down and patted his bloody ear.

"He put one over on you. I'm betting the murderers at Toggart's house just breezed through the front door while you wasted time looking for them. Dillard probably sent them scooting and then stalled you to give them time. They wanted to rob Toggart's house of valuables he'd bought from them—knowing he was dead. I hope Dillard isn't. A bullet is too good for a rat like him. I . . . What the devil are you doing now?"

Blake looked up from his job of searching the men on the floor. "Looking for a gun that'll have Toggart's prints on it. He must have figured I was one of Dillard's men set to hijack him. It will prove he did have a gun. Soon as I find it, I'm going downtown and get young Stanley."

Grogan laughed. "He's been free for hours. I took him home—not to Headquarters. Sometimes, Blake, I think you're stupid, but say—this stuff beats a chair-warming job by a mile. If you stumble onto anything more, let me know, will you?"

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30x4.80-21	2.45	1.15	32x4	2.95	1.25	36x4	3.65	1.65	
32x4.78-19	2.45	1.25	32x4	2.95	1.25	36x4	3.75	1.75	
32x4.75-20	2.50	1.25	32x4 1/2	3.15	1.45	38x4	3.95	1.95	
32x4.00-19	2.45	1.25	32x4 1/2	3.15	1.45	38x4	3.95	1.95	
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30x2.25-20	2.95	1.35	30x3	3.25	1.45	34x7	10.95	4.65	
30x2.25-21	2.95	1.35	30x3	3.25	1.45	34x7	10.95	4.65	
30x2.25-21	2.95	1.35	30x3	3.25	1.45	34x7	10.95	4.65	
30x2.25-21	2.95	1.35	30x3	3.25	1.45	34x7	10.95	4.65	
30x2.25-21	2.95	1.35	30x3	3.25	1.45	34x7	10.95	4.65	
30x2.25-21	2.95	1.35	30x3	3.25	1.45	34x7	10.95	4.65	
30x2.25-21	2.95	1.35	30x3	3.25	1.45	34x7	10.95	4.65	
30x2.25-21	2.95	1.35	30x3	3.25	1.45	34x7	10.95	4.65	

TRUCK BALLOON TIRES

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30x4.00-19	2.40	1.40	30x4	2.45	1.45	30x4	2.45	1.45	
30x4.00-20	2.40	1.40	30x4	2.45	1.45	30x4	2.45	1.45	
30x4.00-21	2.40	1.40	30x4	2.45	1.45	30x4	2.45	1.45	
30x4.00-22	2.40	1.40	30x4	2.45	1.45	30x4	2.45	1.45	
30x4.00-23	2.40	1.40	30x4	2.45	1.45	30x4	2.45	1.45	
30x4.00-24	2.40	1.40	30x4	2.45	1.45	30x4	2.45	1.45	
30x4.00-25	2.40	1.40	30x4	2.45	1.45	30x4	2.45	1.45	
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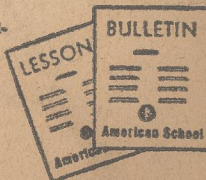
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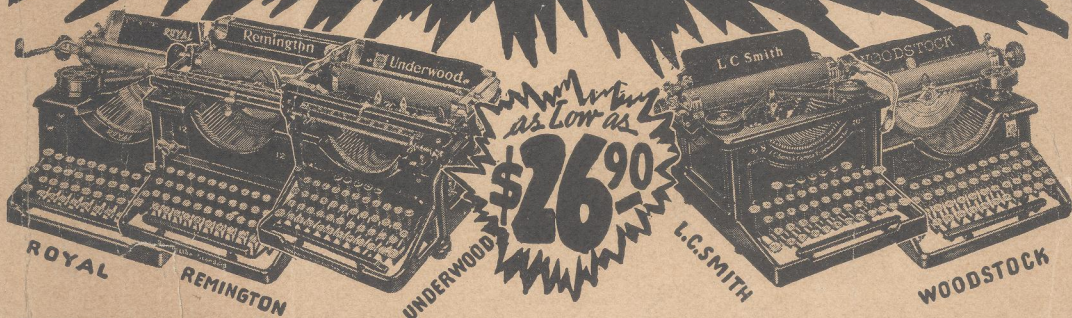


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